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Guide to Christian living





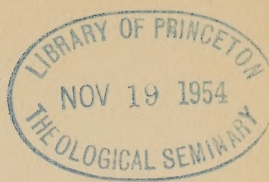


Guide to  
Christian Living

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Otto W. Heick



# Guide to Christian Living



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## Foreword

This volume is designed to be a brief exposition of the Christian way of life. The term "evangelical" as used in this book is not meant to designate any particular Protestant denomination. On the contrary, I have chosen this term in order to lend weight to a conception of the Christian life which, in contrast to every sort of ethical idealism, is thoroughly grounded in the gospel.

In my study of ethics I have learned most from Luther and the Lutheran Confessions, but also from the following four writers. I consider *Die christliche Ethik*, by the late Adolf Schlatter, to be a milestone in the study of ethics on the Continent. Second, Adolf Koeberle's now famous volume, *Quest for Holiness*, has been a great source of inspiration to me ever since its appearance in an English translation. Third, the *Grundriss der Ethik*, by Paul Althaus is of special value. Like the volume of Koeberle, this *Grundriss* is steeped in the genuine theology of the Reformation. Finally, a study of the ethical writings of Emil Brunner has been very helpful and instructive in preparing the pages of this volume.

In the preparation of this book I received encouragement and help from many friends including Dr. Bernard J. Holm, Dr. F. K. Krueger, and Dr. O. P. Kretzmann and I wish to express my appreciation to them.

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Otto W. Heick

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*Part One*

Approach to Ethics

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## What Is Christian Ethics?

The term "ethics" is derived from the Greek words meaning custom, habit, morals.<sup>1</sup> As may be observed in the actual life of nations and individuals, the customs of an age are not always in agreement with the moral demand of God. Christian ethics, therefore, is the science not of the customs observed by Christian people but rather of the divine imperative implied in the message of the Bible. Fundamentally, it deals with the knowledge and the obedient fulfilment of the will of God. As followers of Jesus, Christian people are called to serve God, who has found them and chosen them in Christ Jesus, in order that his will may be done in heaven and in earth.

### *Relation of ethics to dogmatics*

Ethics, in the language of Schlatter, is the "second word" of the biblical message.<sup>2</sup> The "first word" is the proclamation of God's own activity for the salvation of

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. in the New Testament, John 19:40, Luke 22:39, Heb. 10:25, I Cor. 15:33, *et al.*

<sup>2</sup> Adolf Schlatter, *Die christliche Ethik*, Preface to 3rd ed., 1929.

man. In dogmatics, then, we are dealing with that which is given us by God in Christ Jesus; in ethics we are concerned with that which is required of us who believe in Christ Jesus. Consequently the two, dogmatics and ethics, are inseparable. At no time was the gospel a mere instruction about God and "divine things." As Paul says, he has received grace and apostleship to bring about obedience to the faith.<sup>3</sup> The customary separation of the two theological disciplines is for practical reasons only, i.e. to facilitate a logical and well-rounded discussion of both.

### *Theological and philosophical ethics*

Twice in history the church has been confronted with the challenge of a morality that did not have its origin in the divine revelation to which the Bible bears witness: in the centuries when the Christian communities were still surrounded by the cultural standards of the Greco-Roman world, and in "these last days" when the emancipation of the modern mind from the dogma of the church has become a stark reality. For this reason philosophical ethics is no longer a mere academic problem, but a very practical one for the church.

By philosophical ethics we mean a rule of conduct based upon the rational nature of man. The term, therefore, is identical with general, rational, or natural ethics.

With respect to a proper evaluation of philosophical ethics, the problem is closely bound up with that of a

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<sup>3</sup> Rom. 1:5.

natural revelation and natural theology. In the past theologians have gone three different ways.

Medieval scholasticism, as well as present-day Roman Catholicism, is built upon a synthesis of philosophy and theology, reason and revelation, grace and works. Both natural revelation and philosophical ethics are held in high esteem. They are regarded as supplementary to the message and command of the Bible.

In rationalism this artificial union was dissolved in deference to the moral endowment of the natural man. Natural religion and general ethics absorbed the distinctly Christian elements of theological ethics. Kant, for example, based his whole ethical argument on the rational and moral nature of man: *Du kannst, denn du sollst* (you can because you ought).

Following Kant, Ritschlian theology became instrumental in giving a moralistic twist to the proclamation of the gospel.<sup>4</sup> According to Wilhelm Herrmann, morality is universal, it exists independent of religious beliefs. Man could not be religious if he were not a moral being. Morality is the basis of religion because the moral demands and the difficulty, if not impossibility, of realizing them give rise to man's quest for God. Though religion is not the logical deduction of morality, as Kant maintained, nevertheless it is the necessary condition of its origin. Kant laid stress on the good will as the essence of the moral life and on the principle of autonomy. Only

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<sup>4</sup> Neve-Heick, *A History of Christian Thought*, Vol. II (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), pp. 148 ff.



then is the will good when it is conformable to duty and acts solely in response to duty. It is the purity and freedom of the will that makes a person a moral being. These Kantian ideas Herrmann equates with the alleged emphasis on "inwardness" in the New Testament. There is nothing fundamentally new or distinctive in the ethics of the Bible. The words of Jesus only bring to full light what is hidden in man's own moral nature. Consequently Kant is, to Herrmann, the philosopher of Protestantism *par excellence*.<sup>5</sup>

In comparison with the Kantian-Ritschlian tradition, the scales of value have been completely reversed in the crisis theology of recent times. If scholasticism is built on the principle of synthesis, and if the Kantians emphasized the word "general" in both religion and ethics, Karl Barth and his followers are untiring in denouncing both ways as fundamentally unsound and unscriptural. They aim at nothing less than an elimination of both general revelation and general ethics from the consideration of Christian theology. In its extreme form, crisis theology is amoral. Since, in the eyes of Barth, God is the "Wholly Other" his will cannot be known by us, let alone that man can put it into effect.

It is not possible for us to go along with Barth all the way. Scripture unmistakably teaches a general revelation in nature,<sup>6</sup> in history,<sup>7</sup> and in the human

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<sup>5</sup> *Ethik*, 6th ed., 1921.

<sup>6</sup> Ps. 19.

<sup>7</sup> Acts 17:25-28.

conscience,<sup>8</sup> and wherever there is some light of God there is also some fear of God, as all the religions of the world testify. Nevertheless, a great chasm has been fixed between natural and spiritual goodness. The natural life may be commendable from the common human standpoint. It is not fair to speak of all manifestations of the good outside of the Christian revelation as "shining vices." But when all is said the fact remains that all natural life is anthropocentric, legalistic, and self-righteous. It assumes a false independence from God. The worst state of man is that in which he puts all trust in himself. It was precisely for this reason that Jesus said to the Pharisees of his day: "Verily, I say unto you that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."<sup>9</sup>

From the evangelical point of view all Christian life is life dependent on the Holy Spirit. The only way to find God is to be found by him. The only way to know his will is to be taught by him. The only way to do his will is to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Sanctification no less than justification is solely a gift from God.

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<sup>8</sup> Rom. 1:20.

<sup>9</sup> Matt. 21:31.

## Ethics and History

Both religion and morality imply an encounter with the Living God. When Israel came face to face with him in the wilderness he said to the people: "I am the Lord your God; ye shall, therefore, sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy."<sup>1</sup>

Of the two encounters, religious experience, however, is the more penetrating one for God is more than Lord, demanding the good; he is essentially Agape. God is Love! This is the core of divine revelation.<sup>2</sup> It is one of the main tasks of present-day theology to keep religion and ethics in the right relationship. However, the proper connection between the two is impaired when, for example, Herrmann assigns priority to the moral over against the religious. It is also endangered when the moral is regarded as a preliminary step which is to be supplemented by a mystic experience of God. This is the basic fault of Roman Catholicism. The result of such a false separation of the

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<sup>1</sup> Lev. 11:44.

<sup>2</sup> Emil Brunner, *Revelation and Reason* (1946), pp. 218 ff.

two in Catholic thought is a false union instead of an original unity. As a consequence, the relationship of the Christian to God loses its personal character. In Catholic theology the blessedness of life, for example, is more than to be one with the will of God. Obedience is divorced from salvation. God is conceived of as a super-personal Highest Being. This static view of God has a slackening effect upon the Christian life. The moral, wrested from the gracious activity of divine love, issues in moralism. It becomes a means to an end, i.e. to a mystic contemplation of the Godhead. The divine imperative loses its positive implications. The climax of the Christian life is regarded as something negative: the mortification of the body.

The glorification of asceticism in Jerome, for example, knows no bounds. Blaming Heliodorus for having given up his intentions of becoming a hermit, he writes: "Here (in the desert) one can get rid of the burden of the body and soar aloft to the pure splendor of the ethereal. Dost thou fear poverty? But Christ calls the poor blessed. Does labor frighten thee? But no athlete obtains the crown without sweat. Dost thou think of the scanty nourishment? But faith does not fear hunger. Dost thou shrink from stretching thy limbs emaciated from fasting upon the bare earth? But the Lord sleeps with thee. Does the uncombed hair of the shaggy head horrify thee? But Christ is even thy head. Does the immeasurable breadth of the desert frighten thee? Then wander in the spirit through



paradise. Does the rough skin shrivel up from want of baths? But he who is once washed in Christ does not find it necessary to wash himself again."<sup>3</sup> This means in effect: "The dirtier the holier." This asceticism, as Luthardt remarks, "revels in the negation of culture and nature, and even in the negation of God-given natural feeling."<sup>4</sup> Thus Roman Catholic theology rends asunder that which God has joined together: the quest for eternal life and faithful obedience to the divine command to have dominion over nature. The unity of the Christian life is lost. For the Roman Catholic, there is a lower and a higher form of the Christian life, as there are perfect Christians and imperfect ones.

Connected with this asceticism is the Roman Catholic concept of "ordered love." As a matter of fact, this concept of love furnishes the theological justification for the ascetic ideals of monasticism. Following Augustine, Catholic theology maintains that the commandment to love means that first God is to be loved, then our soul, next our neighbor, and lastly our body. Or as the doctrine of "ordered love" is expressed by Bernard of Clairvaux: the first stage of love is carnal love. At the second stage, taught by the sufferings brought upon him by God, man rises to the love of God; but this stage is still selfishness. The repetition of this experience, however, leads him to taste the loveliness of God and thus to begin to love God for

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted from Ernst Luthardt, *History of Christian Ethics*, Vol. I (1889) p. 219.

<sup>4</sup> *Loc. cit.*

the sake of God. Then he also loves all that is of God, and consequently his neighbor. This is the third stage. But it is only on the fourth stage when the spirit, "intoxicated by divine love, wholly forgets itself . . . and becomes one spirit with Him."<sup>5</sup> From this it is evident that Catholic ethics is of necessity eudaimonistic because it is man-centered. Love, according to this teaching, is essentially "acquisitive."<sup>6</sup>

It was at this point that the reformers found it necessary to break with the Roman Catholic view. According to Luther, for example, love is never acquisitive, but rather spontaneous, overflowing, and self-giving. Such love cannot precede faith as Augustine and the scholastics had taught (*fides caritate formata*). Works are not a means to achieve faith. On the contrary, faith is a free gift of God, and Christian ethics is the result of such faith. *Ethics is faith in action*. In faith man receives the love of God and passes it on to his neighbor. By faith and love a Christian man "is placed between God and his neighbor as a medium which receives from above and gives out again below, and is like a vessel or tube through which the stream of divine blessings must flow without intermission to other people. Behold, those are then truly godlike (*Dei formis*) men, who receive from God all that He has in Christ, and in turn show themselves also by their well-doing to be, as it were, the gods of their neighbors."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 322 f.

<sup>6</sup> A. Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, Part II, Vol. II (1939), pp. 314 ff.

<sup>7</sup> *W.A.* X, I, 1, 100.

Believers are "mutually and reciprocally each the other's Christ," doing to their neighbor just as Christ did to them.<sup>8</sup> Or as the Apology to the Augsburg Confession says of faith: it is "the new life which of necessity will produce new motions and good works."<sup>9</sup> This observation results in a fundamentally new concept of the Christian life:

1. It is not good works that make a man good; rather vice versa a good man brings forth good fruit. "For we are justified not by doing that which is just, rather being justified (by grace) we do that which is good."<sup>10</sup> Good works, then, are not the root but rather the fruit of the Christian life.

2. Evangelical ethics is an ethics of freedom. "Precisely in freedom consists the characteristic of Christian piety."<sup>11</sup> In Roman thought, freedom and law are opposites. According to evangelical thought, a man is so united with the will of God by faith that he, in joyful surrender, does what is pleasing in the sight of God. "Faith," Luther remarks in his famous Preface to Romans, "is a divine work in us, which changes and regenerates us, killing the Old Adam while making us new . . ."

3. The distinction between the holy and secular disappears. All things, works, and times are sanctified by faith in God.

4. Consequently "there are no good works except those

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<sup>8</sup> *W.A.* 7, 66. Also see A. Nygren, *op. cit.*, pp. 515 ff.

<sup>9</sup> Chapter III, Art. VI, 129.

<sup>10</sup> Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, Ficker ed., II, 91.

<sup>11</sup> Sören Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Vol. II (1944), p. 202.

which God has commanded, even as there is no sin except that which God has forbidden."<sup>12</sup> This conception gives dignity to the common life. "In this faith all works become equal, and one is like the other; all distinctions between works fall away, whether they be great, small, short, long, few or many."<sup>13</sup> Monasticism is out, and the family is restored to its rightful place.

5. As a further consequence, the concept of merit is eliminated from Christian ethics. A Christian does everything cheerfully, Luther continues, "not that he may gather many merits, . . . but because it is a pleasure for him to please God thereby, and he serves God purely for nothing, content that his service pleases God."<sup>14</sup> The Christian life is a thankful response to God who has redeemed us from destruction.

6. Thus a new concept of perfection is established in Christian ethics. Perfection is not, as in Roman Catholic theology, limited to the chosen few, the "saints." It is a gift imparted to all believers. All who believe in Christ are the saints of God, for they are clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Yet their righteousness is "forensic," it is not their own. According to the empirical reality of life, the Christian no less than the unbeliever is a sinner: "We sin daily and deserve chastisement alone." A Christian, therefore, is at all times in both a state of sin and of justification; he is, as Luther repeatedly says, *simul justus et peccator*

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<sup>12</sup> Luther, *Treatise on Good Works*, P.E., I, 187.

<sup>13</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>14</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 191.

(just but at the same time a sinner). In this way Luther has built a dike on both sides for the protection of the stream of the living waters of God: against the presumptuous arrogance of a holier-than-thou approach as well as against the defeatism of a sterile orthodoxy.

7. The Reformation has restored the biblical emphasis on eschatology to its rightful place in Christian life. Luther's theology is intensely eschatological. The Reformer was possessed of an ardent longing for the "dear Last Day," because Christ's return will usher in the final rule of God. No form of man's social, economic, and political life ought therefore to be equated with the kingdom. Though some forms of communal life may be more just than others, they all fall short of the glory of God.

While the Reformed and Lutheran approaches to ethics are in basic agreement, a difference in emphasis appears from time to time. Because of its Biblicism, the Reformed tradition is tempted to consider certain historical orders of life, as represented in the Old Testament, to be the law of God valid for all times. Likewise, the combining of ethics with the doctrine of predestination has filled Calvinism with a teleology which has lent great weight to its moral force but which of necessity has often resulted in legalism. In comparison with Lutheranism, Calvinism — and especially the Neo-Calvinism of the American churches — is inclined to a perfectionist concept of the Christian life. And in the field of social relations it shows a tendency to place intramundane orders on a par with

the kingdom of God (i.e. the social gospel movement and its antecedents in American theology).

The difference in temper between Lutheranism and Calvinism is also reflected in the place which the law holds in the theological thinking of each tradition.

According to Article VI of the *Formula of Concord*, the law was given to men for three reasons: first, as a discipline and restraint of the wicked (*usus politicus*); secondly, "that men thereby may be led to the knowledge of their sins" (the spiritual or theological use); and thirdly, that because of sin which cleaves to the regenerate, the regenerate may have a rule according to which they should regulate and direct their lives (*usus didacticus*). This concept of a third use of the law originated with Melanchthon. He used it against the Antinomians who taught that the law should be eliminated from the preaching of the church. The concept gained momentum in the thinking of Calvin. To him the third principal and proper use of the law relates to the faithful "in whose hearts the Spirit of God already lives and reigns."<sup>15</sup> Luther, on the other hand, recognizes only a twofold use.<sup>16</sup> The real and proper office of the law is, in his eyes, to lead men to Christ (*usus theologicus*). The other use is the *usus politicus*. The law, says Luther, is always an expression of God's judicial activity. It is never merely informatory. In this

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<sup>15</sup> *Institutes*, Book II, Chapter VII, 12.

<sup>16</sup> *Smalcald Articles*, Part III, Art. II; also *Commentary on Galatians*, W.A. XL, I, 524, 13, et al.



respect Melancthon sides with him in the *Apology*: "The Law always accuses." This teaching of the Wittenberg Reformers is continued in the *Formula of Concord*. Though in contrast to Luther it may teach the third use of the law, it does not regard this use as merely informatory. Rather when the law speaks to a Christian it convicts him of sin. The law is given to the regenerate because regeneration is always imperfect on this side of eternity.

These distinctions must not be dismissed as theological hairsplitting. Actually they are of vital importance for Christian ethics.

Recognizing the first use (*usus politicus*), Lutheranism, like Calvinism, believes that the church has a message for the world. By faith in Christ man is not uprooted from the natural orders of life. For instance, God does not feed the Christian by bread from heaven but rather wants him to work. Though a Christian is not *of* the world, he still is *in* the world. Hence Christian ethics is vitally interested in the affairs of this world. Petitions in the general prayer for the fruits of the earth and success for all lawful occupations, for health and prosperity for all those who are in authority, for judges and magistrates, reflect a true concern of the church. The call to eternal life does not turn man into a daydreamer with respect to the necessities of this life.

Secondly, because the structures of this life are in the realm of the law they are all subject to the judicial activity of God. None of them is absolute. They are all contami-

nated with sin. They will pass away when the kingdom will come in power.

Thirdly, the revealed law is a corrective of the law written in the hearts of man. It guards the Christian from self-imposed human standards of conduct, ascetic as well as libertinistic.

Fourthly, the really Christian life is a fruit of the Spirit who dwells in the hearts of the believers. In the final analysis, the pattern of the Christian life is set by God in Christ. Paul regarded the imitation of Christ as the content of his life so that in turn he could challenge the converts to the faith to imitate him.<sup>17</sup>

The special theological disposition or character of a denomination, therefore, has a vital bearing on Christian ethics. A church which neglects to preach the law to the world cuts itself off from the stream of civilization. However, having lost its savour, "it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."<sup>18</sup>

A church, on the other hand, which refuses to preach the law to its own members instills them with a moral pride which is detrimental to a true Christian humility before God and men. For to conceive of sainthood as a state of moral perfection is a dangerous illusion. It is unscriptural and unrealistic through and through. Finally, a church which holds the real and proper function of the law to

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<sup>17</sup> Phil. 3:17; I Cor. 4:18; I Thess. 1:6.

<sup>18</sup> Matt. 5:13.

be a rule of Christ in conduct either issues in the stern puritanism of the Scottish reformers and of the early New England divines or leads to the secularized concept of the Christian faith as in Protestant liberalism. To keep law and gospel in right relation is indeed a main concern of a genuine evangelical piety.

## Ethics and the Bible

### *The concepts of virtue and duty*

In time past the two concepts of virtue and duty had a controlling effect upon the presentation of Christian ethics. In this respect there is little, if any, difference between such a conservative as Leander Keyser, for example, and Albert C. Knudson, a liberal. However, neither concept is fit to describe the content of the Christian life. If consistently applied, they spell the ruination of the life of the believers in Jesus Christ: for both have their origin in a religious tradition that is alien to the Christian revelation.

In the Bible the meaning of goodness is never expressed in terms of morality alone. It is intimately and inseparably connected with the fact of God. Goodness is holiness. In ethical idealism man may ask what goodness is. In the Bible the Good One asks us questions.

When we think of goodness in terms of God, ethics ceases to be a motionless object of investigation. It comes alive. The ancient Greeks discussed at length the

problem of goodness; but evidently it had little effect on them as a whole. The people of Israel, on the other hand, knew of the living God and developed therefore an intense feeling of moral responsibility, of sin and guilt.

Originating in Greek thought, the concept of virtue found its way into Christian theology through St. Augustine and was given a permanent home in Roman Catholic thought through Thomas Aquinas. The latter distinguished between three classes of virtues: the moral, the intellectual, and the theological. Each succeeding class stands higher than the preceding one. The moral virtues are the four well-known cardinal virtues of the Greeks: *sophia* (prudence), *dikaiosyne* (justice), *sophrosyne* (moderation), and *andreia* (fortitude). The intellectual virtues are primarily the following: *intellectus*, (intelligence), *scientia* (knowledge), and *sapientia* (understanding), to which are then added *ars* (ingenuity) and *prudentia* (prudence). The highest virtues are the three theological: faith, hope, and love. They are infused, while the other virtues are gained by exercise and habit.<sup>1</sup>

In the New Testament the term "virtue" (*arete*) is used very sparingly. In Philippians 4:8, *arete* is included as one of the attitudes to be practiced by Christian people. It is to be noted that in this passage the other states or conditions of the Christian life are not subordinated to but rather co-ordinated with *arete*. The same holds true with

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ernst Luthardt, *History of Christian Ethics*, Vol. I (1889), pp. 336 ff.

respect to the only other passage where *arete* is used as referring to a state of mind of a Christian: II Peter 1:5. In addition to these two passages the word is used twice as describing God in his relation to us. In the same chapter (v. 3), Peter says of God that he has called us by his own glory and excellence (*arete*).<sup>2</sup> Evidently both terms refer to the self-manifestation of God that has taken place once and for all in Jesus Christ. The same is true with respect to the passage of I Peter 2:9, which the Revised Standard Version translates: "that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."<sup>3</sup>

Like Scripture, therefore, we must relegate the word "virtue" to a marginal note in Christian ethics, especially in our own day and age when the concept is shot through with too many false implications. It expresses belief in the ethical ability of the natural man. Conceived of as a disposition, quality, and principle of action, it issues into the self-righteousness of ethical idealists. But the gospel is the end of all ethical idealism. As Christians we are not like the fixed stars that have their light in themselves. Goodness is not a quality which we possess. All our excellence is a mere reflection of the unspeakable excellence

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<sup>2</sup> The Revised Standard Version reads: "to" his own glory, and so on, but offers in the footnote the alternate translation "by." For reasons of syntax we believe that the latter is to be preferred.

<sup>3</sup> Here the King James Version speaks of the "praises of God." This rendition evidently was suggested to the translators by such passages as, for example, Hab. 3:3, Zech. 6:13, et al., where the Septuagint renders the Hebrew word *hoda* (glory) by *arete*.



of God, which we are called to declare. In ethics as well as in dogmatics the maxim stands: *Soli Deo Gloria* (to God alone the glory)!

Likewise the word "duty" is not a term which appropriately describes the response of the Christian to the gracious call of God. Duty and law are twin sisters in religion. They have their origin in the theology of late Judaism. In the Christian church they gained momentum in the teachings of medieval Catholicism. In Protestant thought, duty became a controlling factor in the ethics of rationalism and in the philosophy of Kant. But the spirit of legalism is utterly alien to the content of the gospel. In Christ God has not given us our "due." Hence our response to him cannot be expressed in legal language. Legalism leads to casuistry and probabilism, as is shown in Roman Catholicism.<sup>4</sup>

Here we must recall the biblical dynamic concept of God. God, as Luther says, is "always full of activity." "From him, and through him, and to him are all things."<sup>5</sup> All life has its beginning in him and he is the goal of all life. As Creator we face him as the reality that is prior to our own existence. This knowledge must fill us with the spirit of reverence. Christian ethics is an ethics of reverence. On the one hand, the Christian is a conservative.

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<sup>4</sup> The *Catholic Encyclopedia* gives this definition: "Probabilism is the moral system which holds that, when there is question solely of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of an action, it is permissible to follow a solidly probable opinion in favour of liberty even though the opposing view is more probable."

<sup>5</sup> Rom. 11:36.

On the other hand, we must never overlook the fact that we are separated by the Fall from the original command of the Creator to "dress and preserve" his creation. The "given" in nature and history is not identical with that which was "given" in the beginning. Christian ethics, therefore, must never allow itself to be degraded into a reactionary concept of life. A Christian should never be satisfied with the *status quo*. On the contrary, there is a revolutionary fervor manifest in the proclamation of the divine imperative. For God is also Redeemer. This means that the Christian should be oriented to the future. The kingdom of God is coming. God will bring to perfection all the imperfections of this life. The moment in which we live is time controlled by the redeeming activity of God. Our life is life *zwischen den Zeiten* (in between the present and the coming age). Correctly interpreted, all Christian ethics is "interim ethics."<sup>6</sup> It is the obedient fulfilment of the will of God "in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise" over this benighted world.<sup>7</sup> But the will of God is misunderstood if it is formulated in general terms. It is concrete in every instance. The Christian life is existential living, i.e. in a series of life's alternatives a serious responsible decision has to be made that

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<sup>6</sup> The term originated with the eschatological school. According to Albert Schweitzer, it designates the ethic to be practiced by the disciples in the short interval between their commission, as reported in Matthew 10, and the coming of the kingdom. What this ethic implies, Jesus has explained in the Sermon on the Mount, Schweitzer maintains. See Schweitzer's book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 2nd ed. (1931), p. 532.

<sup>7</sup> II Pet. 1:19.

affects the whole self. We do the will of God if at a given moment we respond to a given divine imperative with body, soul, and spirit.

### *How to use Scripture*

To the liberals the Bible is a religious document reflecting the experience which men of the past had with God. To the fundamentalists, on the other hand, it is a book setting forth the will of God in a series of timeless propositions. But neither view is acceptable to the evangelical Christian. True, we are agreed with the fundamentalists that the Bible is in a unique way the Word of God. Hence Christian ethics must be grounded in Scripture. The Bible is our only dependable guide of faith and life. However, we cannot follow the legalistic and unhistorical interpretation of Scripture as prevailing in some circles of Protestantism. Luther may show us a better understanding of the mission of the Bible. According to him, Scripture proclaims the redeeming activity of God (*was Christum treibet*). Christ is the key to the Bible, and its whole message must be related to him. He is the measure of both the content and extent of the canon. In addition, the Son of God appeared in the likeness of the Jewish people. Revelation is history. The man Jesus was the representative of an ancient culture of the Near East. This means that an "imitation" of Christ is neither required nor possible. Such a controversy as, for example, that among the Amish Mennonites about hooks and eyes instead of but-

tons for men's vests and coats is utterly immaterial to Christian ethics. Nor is every social institution found in the Bible of necessity final. We have no clear word of Scripture denouncing the bigamous life of the patriarchs or the polygamous conduct of David. Nevertheless, the Christian society of today is justified in not tolerating such sex conduct among its members. Nor do we have in the Bible, not even in the New Testament, a clear word outlawing slavery as an unchristian institution. The first impression which the Letter to Philemon must have made on an ardent abolitionist of the last century must have been one of bitter disappointment. Nowhere in this letter has Paul a word of censure for Philemon for participating in an institution so unjust and degrading as that of slavery. Yet the conservatives were utterly wrong when they tried to defend the institution of slavery on biblical grounds. A careful examination of Paul's argument will reveal the fact that he regarded slavery as an institution that is to be dissolved from within under the impact of the Spirit of Christ. Besides, there is no comparison between the first and the nineteenth century A.D. In the days of Paul the Christian church was a small minority. The slightest attempt to change such an institution that was accepted by the whole Greco-Roman world would have spelled immediate disaster for the church. But the nineteenth century defenders of slavery claimed to be members of a Christian society!

Little is achieved in Christian ethics by piling Bible

passages upon each other. The appeal to the letter of the Bible has done much harm in the past. This type of Biblicism must shoulder the responsibility for most failures of the church to understand properly the signs of the times. It also has been a source of such ridiculous controversies as the one referred to above. The Bible must be read with an eye enlightened by the Spirit, for it is the Spirit's mission to bring to light the words of the "historical Jesus." God's revelation in the history of ancient Palestine needs the interpretation of the Spirit of Pentecost. We cannot have the Second Article of the Creed without the Third. The Bible and the Spirit are inseparable.

What we have said implies that we cannot regard the law of the Old Testament as a dependable and final guide of Christian living. This fact was clearly understood by Luther when he, in his two catechisms, interpreted the Ten Commandments consistently in the light of the New Testament. The Law of Moses is not on one level with the law of Christ. As a matter of fact, the latter is no law at all in the proper sense of the word because it is not a command that compels. But it is the order of a new creation. With its promises and threats the law, of necessity, produces a self-centered type of piety. Even the love commanded by the Mosaic Law had its measure in man's love for himself. But to be in the order of the New Testament does not mean to love because it is commanded. It rather means to be "in love."<sup>8</sup> As indicated above, the

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<sup>8</sup> I John 4:16.

very nature of evangelical ethics defies every attempt to circumscribe its content in legal terms. Consequently, no order of this world, which is an order of law, can ever be transformed into the kingdom of God.

The same consideration holds true with respect to the Sermon on the Mount. Like the Law of Moses, it must not be used in a legalistic manner. The various statements of Jesus are not a new law but a collection of paradigms showing how love may act in a given situation.



## *Part Two*

### Basic Truths

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## Sin Isn't Imaginary

When the whole of human history is taken into account from the point of view of Christian ethics, then it must be remembered that moral man was always like a house divided against itself. He was, and still is, a creature of God and a rebel against God at the same time. In this twin relationship to God man is a sinner.

There are found in the Old Testament a great variety of expressions to describe the nature of sin; but we notice chiefly four roots underlying all the verbs and nouns used to define sin: *chata*, to miss the mark; *pesha*, to break away; *asah*, to distort; *shagah*, to go astray. Sin is man's revolt against God, involving guilt and punishment.

In the New Testament we find mainly the two terms *hamartia* and *hamartema*. The first word designates sin as a unified force; the second one refers to acts of sin of an individual. In ethics, then, we must deal with both a doctrine of sin and a doctrine of sins.

In Roman Catholicism the emphasis is laid on the doctrine of sins. Concupiscence, it teaches, cannot really be

called sin; it is only a natural imperfection resulting from the composition of body and spirit in man. If evil inclination itself is no sin, the essence of sin is to be seen in evil deeds. Since evidently not all deeds are alike, Roman Catholic scholars have spent much energy in classifying the various sins. The most fundamental distinction is that of mortal and of venial sins. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, mortal sin cuts man off entirely from his true last end, while venial sin only impedes him in its attainment. We are also informed that "some venial sins are graver than others and less pardonable."

It was here that Luther registered his protest. In the eyes of the Reformation, sin is an "absolute" category. Every sinful act is a rebellion against God, as the psalmist declares: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."<sup>1</sup> Sin is always infinite in character, requiring the infinite mercy of God. Already in his lectures on Romans of 1515-17, Luther states that the teaching of venial sin has no foundation in Scripture.<sup>2</sup>

Luther's concept of sin is thoroughly theocentric. Sin is the negation and denial of God. On the part of man, it

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. 51:4.

<sup>2</sup> Ficker ed. II, 123. Catholics claim that this doctrine is set forth in such passages as I John 5:16 f., and especially in I Cor. 3:8-15. The latter passage is also one of the *loci classici* quoted to establish the Catholic doctrine of purgatory. Actually the passage has no bearing on the topic at all, discussing as it does the problem of unskilled labor in the church. With respect to the first passage, we admit that John uses a language similar to that of Roman Catholicism. Yet its implications are utterly different. Speaking about a kind of sin for which no prayer avails, the passage is in keeping with a similar saying of our Lord in Matthew 12:31 f. The Catholic church teaches precisely the opposite: mortal sin is a type of sin whose effect may be cancelled by prayer.

is *amor sui* (self-love). "Self-will," he says, "is the deepest and greatest evil in us and nothing is dearer to us than our own will."<sup>3</sup> Often without our being conscious of it, this self-seeking will lays hold of our best intentions, especially in our religious life. "When we love God for the sake of His gifts or our own profits, or because of our salvation and eternal blessedness, or from the fear of hell, then we love Him, not for His sake, but for our own sake, with the impure love of concupiscence."<sup>4</sup> Unlike Augustine, Luther conceived of concupiscence not as *libido*, but understood the term to designate man's self-assertion over against God, his Creator. The truly great and weighty sins, therefore, are not the sins of the flesh but the sins of the spirit. Flesh, he expressly says, does not refer in Scripture to the "lower part" of man, i.e. the body. On the contrary, it describes the natural man in his revolt against God including "the wisdom of reason, yea, even the righteousness of the Law." Likewise the word "spirit" in the Bible does not denote man's "better self" or his "higher nature." To live after the spirit means to live by the power of the Holy Spirit who is given to them who believe.<sup>5</sup>

Although we maintained above that every sin is an "absolute category," not every sin has of necessity the same effect either upon him who commits sin or upon his fellow-men. Unfortunately this side of the problem had received little attention in Protestant theology until in recent years

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<sup>3</sup> W.A. II, 105, 9 f.

<sup>4</sup> Neve-Heick, *History of Christian Thought*, Vol. I (1943), p. 230.

<sup>5</sup> W.A. XL, II, 83, *et al.*

Adolf Koeberle has given it serious consideration in his remarkable book, *The Quest for Holiness*. We shall briefly call attention to three different aspects of the problem under discussion:

1. *The way in which sin works.* In many places Scripture paints a clear picture of the crafts and assaults of the devil by which he tries to tempt us. Both Paul and Peter call us to watchfulness and prayer in order that we may be able to quench all the fiery darts of Satan; for to recognize the tempter is the first step on the way to victory. In Proverbs 9:14 ff., sin is compared to a harlot sitting on the doorsteps of her house and trying to ensnare those who pass by. The story of the Fall is a vivid description of the tricky wiles of the beginning of sin. In the same way, the letter of James sets forth, in a solemn warning, the inner connection between lust, sin, and death. At first sight, sin seems to be altogether harmless. "With its first handclasp," as Koeberle says, "it bestows intoxicating pleasure and boundless liberty, and promises still more for the future." <sup>6</sup>

2. *The enslaving effect of different sins.* In the worship services of the church we confess that we have sinned against God "in thought, word, and deed." In no way do we intend to speak lightly of the sins of the mind. A morbid imagination is a terrifying power. For very good reason the psalmist prayed to God: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." No one

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<sup>6</sup> *The Quest for Holiness*, p. 209.

ever slights the warning of the Lord addressed to Cain and then goes unpunished. Nevertheless, in the progress from the unclean and murderous desire to the destructive act, the power of God is present seeking to restrain us from crossing the threshold. The word is worse than the thought. "An evil word is a sped arrow that cannot be recalled. Its results are immeasurable and beyond human control."<sup>7</sup> Grave and weighty, in the eyes of Scripture, are the sins of the tongue, defiling the whole body, and destroying the fellowship which we have one with another.

A word is a deeper descent into evil than a thought, yet the deed is the deepest of the three. Murder, for example, has a more frightful effect both upon the doer and the victim than a hateful thought or an evil word. The act of fornication has more terrible consequences than "mere" evil lust. The surrender to evil, with body, soul, and mind, reveals a far greater loss of faith and the spirit of prayer, and bespeaks a far greater possession of satanic powers than the subjection to unclean desires. A veteran of World War II once said to the writer, "There were times when I felt like doing what others did; but it was not hard for me to forget these tempting thoughts." He had returned with a clean mind and a healthy body while many of his comrades had lost in the war the health of both soul and body. An evil deed can ruin life irremedi-

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<sup>7</sup> Koeberle, *op. cit.*, p. 211.



ably. In the case of syphilis it may even ruin the life of the next generation.

3. *Voluntary and involuntary sins.* Our orthodox forefathers in the seventeenth century differentiated between voluntary and involuntary sins, sins of ignorance and infirmity, sins of commission and omission. These distinctions are not without foundation in Scripture.<sup>8</sup> The sins of a harsh temper, of weakness, of omission because of fear of consequences or of sheer thoughtlessness condemn us severely in the sight of God. Their consequences may be immeasurably sad. But they do not destroy the spiritual life with such frightful permanence as does the intentional fondling of pet sins or the carrying out of an evil deed that has long been premeditated. "The flesh may be weak," Koeberle fittingly observes, "but if only the spirit be willing the heart will be softened to bitter tears of repentance; there will be confession and restoration."<sup>9</sup> "If a man be overtaken in a fault," he will be restored as Peter was. But when one goes and says, like Judas, "What will you give me that I may betray him unto you?" it has become blackest night and Satan has entered into such a man's heart. According to the same spiritual law, sin is a more destructive power in the life of a person who has been enlightened by the Spirit of God than when it enters into the life of the unregenerate man. For this reason the sin of Caiaphas is greater than that of Pilate.

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<sup>8</sup> Luke 12:47 f., 23:24; John 9:41; Rom. 2:2 ff.; James 4:17, *et al.*

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 215.

Because of the mighty works which have been done in their midsts, the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum shall be brought down to hell while it shall be much more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment. The servant who knows his master's will and does not do it shall be beaten with many stripes. It is precisely the Christian who needs be concerned with the prayer, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." <sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ps. 143:2.

## Man Is a Moral Being

All created things bear the stamp of the Creator. This is without question the teaching of the Bible. The "analogy of being" between creature and Creator (*analogia entis*) exists not because of faith, as Karl Barth maintains, but is a reality prior to and independent of faith, because it has its origin in the divine act of creation. However, this fact does not guarantee that man will make right use of this knowledge, as Brunner correctly states.<sup>1</sup> The Bible does not say that, apart from faith, man has an actual, experimental knowledge of God. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God."<sup>2</sup> Yet sin has not effaced the *humanum* ("humanity") of man. He has not become a "turtle," and, Karl Barth notwithstanding, this difference has far-reaching consequences.<sup>3</sup>

If the *humanum* of man is not lost, what then did man suffer in the Fall? To this question Protestant theology

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<sup>1</sup> Emil Brunner, *Revelation and Reason*, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> I Cor. 2:14.

<sup>3</sup> For the latest review of the caustic controversy between Karl Barth and Emil Brunner on the subject under discussion compare Brunner's book, as referred to, pp. 58-80.

has given an answer different from that of Roman Catholicism.

Roman Catholic theology distinguishes between the natural condition in which man was created and some supernatural gifts that were added. The natural condition consisted of the ability to think and to will, i.e. man was a rational and moral being. The additional gifts were those of righteousness, holiness, and spiritual knowledge. In the Fall, Rome teaches, the natural endowment, which was the real image, remained unimpaired; only the supernatural gifts were lost. The humanity of man suffered no real loss in the Fall. Man's nature is still in an uncorrupt state.

To meet the challenge of synergism implicit in the teaching of Rome, our theological forbears introduced the distinction between the image properly so called (*strictē dicta*) and the image in the wider sense (*late dicta*). The image properly so called consisted of the original righteousness, holiness, and wisdom of man. The image in this sense was utterly lost in the Fall. Sin, therefore, has thoroughly corrupted the very nature of man. Yet even after the Fall, man is still an intelligent, self-determining, rational being. In this sense the image cannot be lost because it distinguishes man as man.<sup>4</sup>

Even sinful man is a rational and moral being possessing self-consciousness and self-determination. It is in these

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<sup>4</sup>On Luther's view of the image see our article "Luther's Exposition of Genesis I-III, in *The Lutheran Church Quarterly*, January, 1948, pp. 61 ff.

two things that man differs from the brute. Some animals may possess a high degree of intelligence, but no brute is ever conscious of its own self. The brute is an "it," not properly speaking a "he" or "she." It exercises no self-determination. It may manifest preferences, but these are a matter not of free choice but of necessity. In comparison with man, no animal has moral responsibility. Hence an animal cannot commit sin. Man alone has sinned and must face the judgment of his Creator.

### *Freedom of the will*

Considerable energy has been spent by theologians and philosophers alike to define the exact degree of moral freedom exercised by man. The following views have suggested themselves as a solution:

1. Psychological determinism, which holds that moral action, like natural occurrences, takes place in a strictly determined way. This view leaves no room for divine providence, or miracle, or prayer. Events happen not because they are willed and directed by an intelligent Being; instead they occur in accordance with the fixed laws of the universe. The feeling of freedom and responsibility is an illusion.<sup>5</sup>

2. Fatalism, which teaches that all things are ordered for men by the inscrutable, if not arbitrary, will of God, or the fixed laws of nature. In Christian theology it has

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<sup>5</sup> Spinoza, Herbert Spencer, *et al.*

given rise to the doctrine of supralapsarian predestination.<sup>6</sup> It is carried out to its most rigid logical conclusion in the kismet doctrine of Mohammedanism.

3. Indeterminism, a doctrine which holds that man has both formal and material freedom, and is able of himself to do what is truly good.<sup>7</sup>

4. Over against these theories, the Lutheran church teaches that man has moral freedom "for the attainment of civil righteousness, and for the choice of things subject to reason." "Nevertheless," the Lutheran confessions declare, "man has no power, without the Holy Ghost, to work the righteousness of God." In other words, although man is an intelligent and moral agent in all things pertaining to this world, he is not able of himself to work spiritual righteousness. Salvation is by grace only.<sup>8</sup>

### *The conscience*

As the word indicates, *con-science* means "knowledge-with." The conscience is the power of unifying individual experience. It is the knowledge of self, i.e. the self morally directing and judging its own activities. It is the element constituting personality.

As to the formal aspect, the conscience is a universal possession of mankind. But with regard to content, it is

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<sup>6</sup> Augustine, Calvin.

<sup>7</sup> Pelagius, Kant.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Art. XVIII of the *Augsburg Confession* and the corresponding article in the *Apology*.



dependent upon a man's education, culture, and religion. In this respect there is some truth in Spencer's view that the conscience is the collective will of society. This theory, however, overlooks two facts: (1) that many individuals have forcefully protested, in the name of conscience, against the collective will of society; (2) that the moral feelings of value and disvalue, and the biological feelings of pleasure and displeasure, are basically different.

In the Greek version of the Old Testament the word *syneidesis*, conscience, is found only in Ecclesiastes 10:20. In the New Testament it is found several times in the writings of Paul, in First Peter, and in the Letter to the Hebrews. Here it signifies an inward knowledge of God and of his commandments,<sup>9</sup> but also a knowledge of man's sin and revolt against the orders of God.<sup>10</sup> The conscience bears witness of a divine law written in the hearts of men.<sup>11</sup> All these ideas reflect the concept of conscience as held by the Stoics. A unique feature of the New Testament, however, is that of a "good conscience." Having been received by baptism into sonship with God, the Christians have been cleansed from an "evil conscience." Their sins being forgiven, they now have a "good conscience." A pure heart, faith unfeigned, and a good conscience are their common possession. The good conscience is an incentive to good works. Unfortunately, however, some of the

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<sup>9</sup> Rom. 13:5; I Cor. 4:4, 8:7; II Cor. 4:2; Heb. 9:14; I Pet. 2:19.

<sup>10</sup> Heb. 9:9, 14; 10:2.

<sup>11</sup> Rom. 2:15; cf. 9:1 f; II Cor. 1:22.

Christians still have a "weak conscience" while the mind and conscience of the impure is "defiled."<sup>12</sup>

### *Natural law*

The concept known as natural law originated in Greek and Roman philosophy. In Greek tragedy it is an expression of a reverent mind's reflection on the retributive activity of the immortal gods. The concept also lies at the basis of the ethics of deism and rationalism which are orientated around a natural theology as sufficient for religion. The American Declaration of Independence voices the same sentiment. It likewise played an important part in the opening statement of Justice Robert H. Jackson in the Nuremberg trial of the Nazi war criminals.

The fathers of the early church incorporated this concept into the system of Christian theology, identifying it with the moral order of creation as established by God. Since the Middle Ages it has been an integral part of Catholic thought. Luther practically equated it with the moral commandments of the Mosaic Law. As known apart from the special revelation it binds, he says, all the world, even the heathen, Turks and Jews, for it is just as divine as the revealed law of Scripture.<sup>13</sup>

The biblical basis for this concept of natural law is seen in such passages as Romans 1:19 ff., and especially 2:14-16, "When the Gentiles, which have not the law (of

<sup>12</sup> I Pet. 3:21; Heb. 10:2; 9:14; I Tim. 1:5; Tit. 1:15 f; *et al.*

<sup>13</sup> P.E., III, 29.

Moses), do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which shew the work of the law written in their hearts. . . .” In brief, the concept of natural law stems from the biblical teaching of the image of God. By natural law therefore we understand those innate principles of right and justice that are germane to the moral nature of man. It is law dictated by the conscience, not law deduced from experience. It is law regulating man’s relation to the moral government of God. However, the fact that sinful man has some knowledge of right and wrong does not guarantee that he will make right use of it. No one knows the Creator properly unless his heart and mind are illumined by the Holy Spirit.

## God Rules

As Christians we "believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." Man's existence is grounded in God. His own nature reflects the perfect moral nature of the Creator. Only as a divine imperative, therefore, is the moral a "categorical imperative" for only when the moral is not contingent upon the needs of man or some other intramundane value is it a truly transcendental verity.

Because of the tragic results of the Fall, we dare no longer equate the natural with the divine.<sup>1</sup> We are separated from our beginning by the Fall, and we need Jesus in order that he may make known to us the moral will of God.

The will of God is essentially one: God wills himself. "From him, and through him, and to him are all things." This is His righteousness, as revealed in the gospel. The

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<sup>1</sup> The complete identification of the two was the basic error of National Socialism and must bear the main responsibility for the devastating influence of Hitlerism in the ethical life of Europe. For this reason National Socialism was a thoroughly pagan movement.

righteousness of God is identical with his love. God is love! In Christ Jesus the love of God has appeared unto all men. His love is ever-giving, spontaneous, and overflowing.

Precisely because God is holy love, he aims at the establishment and maintenance of a moral order. Hence those who refuse to be drawn into the orbit of his love experience him in his wrath. Since it is alien to God's nature to inflict punishment, the exercise of his wrath is a "strange work" (*opus alienum*). His wrath is a necessary reaction "against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." <sup>2</sup>

Because the will of God is essentially one, the divine imperative also is one: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. . . . This is the great and first commandment." <sup>3</sup> We are never asked to do anything else but love. "Love is the fulfilment of the law." <sup>4</sup> *Dilige et fac quod vis*, Augustine says—love and do what you want to do, "This commandment," says Kierkegaard, "is not all negative, neither is it abstract; it is in the highest degree positive and in the highest degree concrete. When the ethical becomes more concrete it passes over into the definition of morals and customs." <sup>5</sup>

Because God created man in his own image, the other command is like unto the first: "Thou shalt love thy

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<sup>2</sup> Rom. 1:18.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 22:37 f.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 13:10.

<sup>5</sup> *Either/Or*, Vol. II, p. 214.

neighbor as thyself.”<sup>6</sup> The love of God and the love of man cannot be divorced.<sup>7</sup> It is the function of the individual commandments to drive home the truth that the will of God is always infinite, absolute, never finite or limited. Christian ethics is an organic whole, not an agglomeration of “cases.” The technique of casuistry does not thrive in the soil of the gospel.

The divine imperative encounters man as a claim to action. It is mediated to us through the historical forms of our lives. God meets us in the men with whom we associate in work and leisure. This fact confers infinite dignity upon all conditions of life and fills every moment with infinite responsibility.

Because of the fact that the divine imperative is mediated to us through the historical forms of our lives, there exists an interrelation between the divine command and the laws which govern the technical life of society, for it is evident that these laws do not spring from faith. They are rather inherent in the forms of natural and technical life.

What, then, is the function of the divine imperative with regard to these forms of life?

1. Cooperation. The gospel does not destroy nor make superfluous the natural forms of life. The Christian continues to be a real human being. To maintain his natural life he must co-operate with the appetites of his body,

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<sup>6</sup> Matt. 22:39.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the First Letter of John.



otherwise he would die. The same applies to the economic life. That which counts in the struggle for existence is not spiritual but rational knowledge, not faith but effectiveness. It is not the Christian but the skilled mechanic who can operate, build, or repair an engine. There is no such thing as a Christian locomotive. As a matter of fact, ethical qualities are never resident in things as such. A thing may be called good or bad only with respect to the purpose for which it is being used by man. Alcohol, for example, is bad when it is consumed by a drunkard, but a good gift of the Creator when used for disinfection. In all these relations the divine imperative acts not as a constitutive but as a regulative force.

Thus far we have spoken only of the world of material things. Economic life, however, is deeply penetrated by the personal and social aspects of life. Goods are produced by men and for men. Economics and politics move in the realm of the personal, the I-thou world. How, then, can the divine imperative, the command of love, be made effective in these forms of historical life?

On the one hand, it is a dangerous illusion, particularly apparent in the pacifist point of view, to assert that the law of love can be made the constitutive principle of statesmanship. Underlying this contention of Christian pacifism and socialism is the failure to recognize that sin poisons and perverts human relationships on every level. This shortcoming brings with it a confusion of what Luther called the two kingdoms of God: the kingdom of wrath

and love, justice and mercy, Moses and Christ, the kingdom of the left hand and of the right hand of God.

On the other hand, the church must not shrink from moral responsibility in the realm of economics and politics. These orders are not autonomous in the sense that they are not subject to ethical standards. Both the industrialist and statesman are stewards of God and are responsible to him. Our economic system and the state will either recognize this fact or die. There is no other alternative.

2. Prophetic criticism. The church as the keeper of the mysteries of God must at all times call the attention of men to death. No life, successful though it may be, is worthwhile unless it lays up for itself treasures in heaven. The rich and wise of this world are in many cases paupers in relation to the world to come. Godliness is more than efficiency. They who now fare sumptuously may weep and lament when the kingdom has come in fullness. This recognition will serve as a check upon man's unbridled lust for money and power. In a Christian society there should always be a place for those who prefer to live the life of a "eunuch" for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, the proclamation of the gospel will prevent us from identifying our Western democratic culture with the kingdom. No social order is final, because no order is ever perfectly just and good. It takes God himself to actualize the Four Freedoms of the Atlantic Charter.

3. Prophetic charity. In the ministry of Jesus the

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<sup>8</sup> Matt. 5:28-30, 38-42, 19:12.

preaching of the Word went hand in hand with works of love. The church must follow him unconditionally, for it is a place not only for the proclamation of a message, but also for action. In every society there are the sick and the poor. Sick life is not "inferior life," as Hitler held. No man is ever called to judge the life of another. On the contrary, the church must show the world the dignity and value of all human life by caring for the sick and by feeding the poor. By so doing it proves that it is not always the wise, mighty, and noble after the flesh who are called by God, and that ultimately not justice but love is the law of life.



*Part Three*

The Christian and His God



## Man's Moral Dilemma

The Christian life is service *for* God. In this statement all Christians concur. But the monergism of the Bible is kept pure only when we take the fact seriously that it is also life *from* God. According to Scripture, God is the source as well as the goal of our lives. The moral life is Christian only insofar as it is lived in right relation to God.

By nature, man's relation to his Creator is wrong. Since the Fall man has been in revolt. In unmistakable terms Scripture speaks of him as a rebel against the Most High, a fact which is borne out by the painful experience of every individual. The history and destiny of Israel, for example, is a warning to all individuals and nations. The moral dilemma of mankind is a universal fact. Although we may admit that there is a difference between good and bad among men in matters which the *Augsburg Confession* calls "civil righteousness" the verdict stands that in the sight of God "there is none that doeth good, no, not one."<sup>1</sup> Man cannot save himself, just as no one can

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. 3:12; Ps. 14:1 f.



save himself by pulling himself up by his own bootstraps. Man must be saved by a power outside of himself, namely, by God. This is the message of the Bible: that God is a God who in Christ Jesus condescended to save a fallen world. Jesus came, as he said of himself, to save not him who regards himself as righteous but precisely the "sinner," i.e. man in utter despair of himself.

In modern literature, Dostoevski, the famous Russian novelist, seems to us unexcelled in driving home to the reader this basic truth of the New Testament. Our reference is especially to his novel, *Crime and Punishment*. Here the author has the wretched Marmeladov, father of Sonia, argue, "Why am I to be pitied, you say? Yes! There is nothing to pity me for! I ought to be crucified, crucified on a cross, not pitied! . . . But He will pity us who has had pity on all men. . . . And when He has done with all of them, then He will summon us. 'You too come forth,' He will say . . . And He will say unto us, 'Ye are swine, made in the Image of the Beast' . . . And the wise ones and those of understanding will say, 'Oh Lord, why dost Thou receive these men?' And He will say, 'This is why I receive them . . . that not one of them believed himself to be worthy of this.' And He will hold out His hands to us and we shall fall down before Him . . . and we shall weep . . . and we shall understand all things! . . . Lord, Thy kingdom come!"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> English translation by C. Garnett (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1917), p. 23.

The New Testament especially is rich in the use of metaphors which describe the redeeming activity of God. In the parables of Jesus the repentant sinner is welcomed by the father who, moved by compassion, runs and kisses him. Or regardless of his station in life, he is invited by the servants of the Lord to a festive banquet; on another occasion he is presented by the King with a wedding garment. In these statements the epistolary literature of the New Testament concurs: Christ is "the propitiation for our sins," as the apostles Paul and John write. We are bought with a price. Jesus has reconciled us to God. In him God has forgiven us. God now is the "justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."<sup>3</sup> Thus men in revolt are made citizens of the household of God, and the prodigal son is made a child of God because he is born again of water and of the Spirit. Regeneration, like justification, describes the newness of life as a gracious gift of God. To the redeeming work of God man responds, psychologically speaking, in concentrated activity. God's redeeming act is effective in our own decision. The divine indicative, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you"<sup>4</sup> and the divine imperative, "Turn thou unto me"<sup>5</sup> are inseparable. That which the Scriptures call "regeneration" as the act of God they call "conversion" as the act of man.

Forgiveness or justification has far-reaching ethical consequences.

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<sup>3</sup> Rom. 3:26.

<sup>4</sup> Ez. 36:25.

<sup>5</sup> Jer. 3:7.

1. Our rebellion stands condemned before God as guilt. All life apart from God is unethical because of the essentially egocentric character of the natural man, and the depth of man's rebellion is often more evident where "the pride of life" is at home than at the place where the destructive forces of sin have become a stark reality.

2. Having been received into fellowship with God our moral servitude is ended. In Greek thought, freedom meant to be one's own sovereign. But experience bears out the contention that independence from God spells moral slavery for man. Christ, on the other hand, has set the believers free for freedom. As stated by Augustine, "service to God is the greatest liberty." Through God "we are more than conquerors."<sup>6</sup> As his sons, we shall abide in his house forever.

3. God has not cast us off forever. He is pleased with our service no matter how incomplete or stained with sin it may be. Christian ethics is an ethics of justification, and in a double sense. We are called into his service by the forgiveness of sin and he maintains us in his service by daily forgiving us abundantly all our sins. By grace God purifies unto himself a "peculiar people, zealous of good works."<sup>7</sup>

Having received the forgiveness of sins we are placed under the power of the love of God which in turn creates in us love for God. As children we rejoice in doing the

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<sup>6</sup> Rom. 8:37.

<sup>7</sup> Tit. 2:14.

Father's will because we are now one with the will of God. What once seemed to be a heavy burden and an insurmountable task has now become a matter which permits no alternative: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" By faith we are so joined to God that the heaven within us, as Luther says, unceasingly does good works for the benefit of our neighbor and to the glory of God until the day when the body, too, will be redeemed from sin, death, and hell.<sup>8</sup> Although the gospel rules alone in the article on justification, faith and good works cannot be divorced. This leads us to the problem of sanctification.

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<sup>8</sup> *Sermon for the Second Day of Christmas, E.A. VII, 165.*

## Holiness and Wholeness

The message of the forgiveness of sins is the core of the Christian religion. Yet through Christ we are saved not only from the guilt of sin but also from the power of sin. As Christians we have been planted "in the likeness of his death . . . that the body of sin might be destroyed."<sup>1</sup> Both justification and sanctification are imparted to every believer.

Like forgiveness, holiness of life is a gift of God. Augustine has said, "Give what Thou commandest and command whatever Thou wilt" (*Da quod jubes et jube quod vis*). We have referred to the divine indicative, the gracious promise of God that he will sprinkle clean water upon the people. There are numerous other passages corroborating this promise of God, among them, Jeremiah 31:31ff. which speaks of the promise of the new covenant, and Ezekiel 36:26 ff. which speaks of the new heart and the new spirit. In the New Testament the death and resurrection of Jesus are considered to be inseparable.

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. 6:5 f.

arable, signifying that "the old Adam in us is to be drowned and destroyed . . . and that again the new man should daily come forth and rise, that shall live in the presence of God in righteousness and purity for ever."<sup>2</sup> Christ, according to apostolic witness, is both the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world" (in the act of reconciliation) and the "Lion of God" who goes forth conquering sin, death, and devil. All the ethical imperatives of the Bible must be seen against the background of the great divine indicative that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." From start to finish salvation is by grace alone: "Whom he has justified, them he also has glorified."<sup>3</sup>

Yet there is another side to the problem of sanctification. As stated above, the saving action of God is effective in the action of man. God claims the natural faculties of man. He wants the heart and the members of our body to serve him. This fact explains the abundant use of the imperative in the Bible. In the Old Testament as well as in the New, man is charged to repent, to turn to God, to amend his ways. The scriptural emphasis on the monergism of grace in no way eliminates man's own responsibility. Not even the teaching of predestination destroys belief in man's final responsibility for his being lost. Though dead to God in sin, the natural man is psychologically and ethically alive doing all those things that

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<sup>2</sup> *Small Catechism*, Part IV.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 8:30.



lead to eternal perdition. He possesses the awful potentiality to frustrate the saving work of God. Although in the process of redemption he must be denied all credit, he must never be relieved of his full responsibility. The "I will" is a gracious gift of God; the "I will not" has its root in man's own rebellious heart.<sup>4</sup> This is the paradox of the kingdom of God.

Inquiring about the content of sanctification, we have to add a few observations on the meaning and significance of "good works."

First, according to the Bible and Reformation theology, good works do not make a person good, as the Roman church teaches. Precisely the opposite is true: the person himself must be good before there can be any good works. Only "a good tree can bring forth good fruit." Good works do not precede but rather follow faith, just as the tree must exist before the fruit. The consideration of works should be entirely excluded from the "article of justification," as the *Formula of Concord* declares in Article IV, but it must be given serious consideration in the teaching of sanctification.<sup>5</sup> "All the good works must be done and receive from faith the inflow of their goodness."<sup>6</sup>

As to the type of good works, Luther evidently is right when he states, "There are no good works except those

<sup>4</sup> Adolf Koeberle, *Quest for Holiness*, p. 143.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Luther's *Treatise on Christian Liberty*, P.E., II, 331 f.

<sup>6</sup> Luther, *Treatise on Good Works*, P.E., I, 187.

which God has commanded."<sup>7</sup> The works of monasticism, therefore, have no basis in God's Word. Catholic piety is contrary to Scripture and produces men that are strangers to ordinary life. A Catholic nun is indeed a strange spectacle on the busy streets of our modern cities. Among evangelical Christians this must not be so. Keeping in mind Luther's doctrine of our calling, holiness of life is to be actualized in works for the nourishment of the body or the common welfare of mankind. The call to holiness is universal, it is not only the concern of a privileged few who feel the demand for development of an intensive religious life.

It is evident that evangelical holiness has social implications. It is concerned not only with saving one's own life but also that of one's neighbor. Like the life of Jesus, the Christian life is to become a sacrifice in the service for others.

From the fact that the believer is always "just and at the same time a sinner," it follows that there is a difference in the motives that drive him to holiness. Fundamentally speaking, there are two such motives: gratitude and fear. The whole Scripture reverberates with the praise of God who has redeemed his people from destruction. It may be sufficient here to call attention to such well-known passages as Psalms 100, 103, or Romans 8:28 ff. According to the Book of Revelation, every creature in heaven and on earth concurs in the praise of God and his Christ. On

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

the other hand, because we are still flesh, Scripture in many places admonishes us that we should dread the displeasure of God "and do nothing contrary to his commandments." It is precisely the Christian who needs to be reminded that he must work out his own salvation "with fear and trembling." A Christian must always be grateful and fearful at the same time.

This paradox of the Christian life precludes every notion of perfectionism in genuine evangelical piety. The teaching of perfectionism is a dream, and a dangerous one at that. It is both unscriptural and contrary to Christian experience.

The paradox, as discussed here, is well exemplified by the Reformer's interpretation of baptism. Since baptism "worketh forgiveness of sins" every baptized person is a beloved child of God. The baptized are the "saints" in the New Testament, for "when a man comes forth out of baptism," Luther states, "he is pure and without sin, wholly guiltless." This is the power of baptism. But many, Luther complains, "do not rightly understand this." Man is not pure empirically, but "sacramentally, which means nothing else than that he has the sign of God, i.e. baptism, by which is shown that his sins are all to be dead, and he too is to die in grace, and at the Last Day to rise again, pure, sinless, guiltless, to everlasting life."<sup>8</sup> Baptism, then, is both a gift and a task. Our holiness is to be understood dialectically. We are holy by the imputation of God, but we

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<sup>8</sup> *Treatise on Baptism*, P.E., I, 59 f.

are sinners according to the empirical reality of our existence. Putting it another way, we might say that we are Christians and we are on the way of becoming Christians at the same time. Therefore we daily repent and pray for the forgiveness of sins.

The dialectical riches and severity of our Christian life are also forcefully impressed upon us in the Eucharist. "The holy elements (are) for saints" (*Ton hagion tois hagiois*), the primitive church declared. But the guests are not holy in themselves. If the Supper is for holy people then all of us would be forever excluded from the Table of the Lord. But here again the love of God is seen in action, making holy him who is not holy. The Supper, therefore, is another means by which Christ gathers and sanctifies unto himself a peculiar people, zealous to serve him.

Finally, the paradoxical character of our life finds expression in the concept of prayer both as a privilege and a responsibility. Knowing through Christ that the Father himself loves us, we now may come "boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and to find grace to help in time of need."<sup>9</sup> "The spirit of adoption" encourages us to call him "Abba."<sup>10</sup> This is our privilege. But because of the slackness of our flesh the call to prayer often seems to us more a solemn obligation than a joyful privilege. The many exhortations to prayer found in Scrip-

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<sup>9</sup> Heb. 4:16.

<sup>10</sup> Rom. 8:5.

ture will always have a rightful place in the Christian life. Prayer is an art to be learned in life-long exercise, requiring time and concentration. To be reminded of this is particularly important in view of the many distractions of modern life. Christian life is basically devotional, i.e. it is open to the divine directive that is seeking us in our life. Grounded in the Father-Son relationship with God in Christ, prayer embraces the whole content of actual life, i.e. it is thanksgiving, petition, and adoration. In the prayer of thanksgiving, we acknowledge ever anew that we owe our whole being and salvation to God. In the prayer of petition, we come before God with our needs for ourselves and for others. The significance of this prayer lies in its being answered by God either by granting us our desires, or by purifying them, or by making us to acquiesce in his will. In adoration, the church transcends all limitations of earthly life, giving praise to God for his gracious revelation in Christ Jesus.

Prayer, as a rule, requires words but in exalted moments of life it may become speech without words. In fact, as the Apostle says, Christians should learn to pray "without ceasing," which means that all serious movements of the heart should become prayer to God.

In prayer man stands personally before his God. Since by faith, however, the individual has become a member of the one holy, Christian, and apostolic church, his prayer tends to become an act of common worship with the historic liturgies uniting Christians of divers places and ages

in a world fellowship of prayer and supplication. This means that there is in evangelical ethics a rightful place for church ritual, including donations for the beautification of our buildings of public worship. The ritual part of our faith is a reminder that the Christian life is destined for the worship of God. Of course, it can never be a substitute for the offering of our bodies as "a living sacrifice." The ethical emphasis is right as a protest against a merely ceremonial religion, yet, "Ritual religion has an equal right to protest against moralism, where in the end God simply disappears from sight behind social ethics and philanthropy, and is thus swallowed up in good citizenship,"<sup>11</sup> as in a large section of American Protestantism. The ceremonial sacrifices should be a testimony of man's willingness to be such a sacrifice in daily life. They also may testify to the religious significance of matter as set forth in the "Nature Psalms" and to the hope which we have for the whole creation of God.

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<sup>11</sup> Emil Brunner, *The Mediator* (1934), p. 476.

*Part Four*

The Christian's Personal Life





## Life Is a Trust

God is the giver of life. He also is the goal of life. Hence all life is sacred. For the sake of God we should have reverence for every creature because even the most insignificant being is his creation. Torturing animals is a sin against the Creator. However, this does not mean that we should be guided by the mystic principle of "reverence for life." Mysticism is pantheism, and nature worship is idolatry. Life is to be revered by us not in a mechanically uniform fashion, but in accordance with the plan and order of creation. Because of the law of nutrition, inherent in nature, millions of the lower animal kingdom must die in order that the members of the higher order may live.

Albert Schweitzer's basic concept of ethics as "reverence for life" means, in the eyes of the famous theologian, philosopher, and medical missionary, reverence for all life including floral and animal life. All kinds of life, he maintains, are entitled to the full circle of existence. The truly ethical person, he says, "breaks no leaf from the tree,

he plucks no flower, he is careful to crush no insect with his feet. When he works by his lamp in the summer evening he prefers to keep his window shut and to breathe the stifling air rather than to see insect after insect falling on his table with singed wings.”<sup>1</sup> The ethical person injures and destroys life only under compulsion of a necessity which he cannot escape as, for example, the doctor who must kill the tsetse fly in order to save the life of a human being.

There is much truth in Schweitzer's criticism of man's careless and ruthless destruction of subhuman life. For good reasons he may complain that Descartes, as it seems, has bewitched the whole Western world with his statement that animals are nothing but machines. Following this trend of thought, Kant and Bentham also held that man is under no ethical obligation to the animal world. Kant defends a humane treatment of animals principally as a means of preventing the emergence of a cruel attitude in the mind of man toward his fellow-men. Indeed we look in vain for a discussion of a Christian's relation to the animals in the standard works of theological ethics. The problem simply does not exist for these writers.

The Bible, however, takes a different view. In the eyes of the sacred writers God gives meat to the beasts of the

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Charles R. Joy, *The Animal World of Albert Schweitzer* (1950), p. 169.

The most outspoken exponent of the "reverence for life" philosophy is Albert Schweitzer. "It is good to sustain and further life, it is evil to destroy and thwart life." For a criticism of this principle compare Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, pp. 124, 602.

field, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea. By their beauty and strength the Creator is glorified in the world. Like man, his beasts of burden are entitled to rest on the Sabbath day. The ox treading out the corn shall not be muzzled. Although man is right when he makes the animals serve his own purpose, torturing or killing them for mere fun or entertainment is ethically wrong. When, however, an animal must be destroyed or butchered it should be done in the most painless way. An ethical person will especially be interested in the welfare of his domesticated animals. He will see to it that they are not overworked and are properly fed and sheltered.

Respecting the creative power of God, we hold that the practice of "mercy killing" (euthanasia) is unacceptable from the Christian point of view. The practice has been advocated from two different angles. Society, it is said, should have a right to remove from its midst all forms of "inferior life," i.e. the physically and mentally deformed. But what human being can set himself up as an infallible judge over the lives of others? The ruthless application of this principle under the Hitler regime should make us forever apprehensive.

Sponsors of euthanasia legislation in America would, of course, provide very careful safeguards against abuse. They feel that it should be limited to the inducing of death painlessly in cases where months of suffering would otherwise be inevitable and that it should be applied only with the full consent of the sufferer. Even if such a proposal

should become law a Christian, we hold, could have no part in it. If the sufferer is a Christian he will bear his sufferings with trust in the unsearchable ways of God. No man is lord over the beginning and end of life. They are entirely in the hands of God.

For the same reason, we believe, a Christian doctor will have no part in expediting death. On the other hand this does not mean that he should use his knowledge and skill in prolonging the suffering of a patient by administering drugs or by performing a series of operations which, according to his estimate, will be of no avail. Patient and doctor alike would often do well if they remembered the saying of David, "Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man."<sup>2</sup>

The criticism applies also to abortion. Christian ethics cannot support the attitude which would give to a pregnant woman free choice as to whether or not she should give birth to her child. However, situations can arise where love and respect for a living mother must be divorced from love to the unborn. If the life of a pregnant mother is seriously in danger a qualified physician is morally right when he, by killing the embryo, tries to save the life of the mother. This attitude is in keeping with the law of creation, according to which undeveloped forms of life must perish in great numbers in order that some fully developed life may be maintained. In addition, the life of

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<sup>2</sup> II Sam. 24:14.

a mother is normally much more valuable because of the position of a mother in her family.

In a similar way, if conception is the result of a criminal assault, we cannot deny a woman the right to decide whether this child should be born. In such a case the church can counsel abortion, the bishops of the Church of Sweden declared in a recent statement.<sup>3</sup>

The traditional teaching of the Roman Catholic church has been that it is morally wrong to remove the embryo as a means of forestalling the danger to a mother's life. However, of late the church has made some concessions. In the fall of 1951, the pope was reported as having said that a future mother urgently requiring aid may undergo an operation or other medical treatment which as an "indirect" consequence might cause the death of her unborn child.<sup>4</sup>

The Catholic attitude is based on the dogma that an unborn child having an immortal soul cannot enter heaven unless it has received in baptism the forgiveness of original sin. The souls of children who die without the blessing of baptism are said to be contained in the *Limbus Infantium*, an intermediate state between heaven and hell.

Likewise, the practice of sterilization is contrary to the Christian ethic. No man has a right wilfully to deprive himself or others of the power of reproduction. The

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<sup>3</sup> "A Letter Concerning a Life Problem of a People," reprinted in an English translation in *The Lutheran Quarterly*, February, 1952, pp. 94 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. also the chapter on "The Church and Medicine" in Paul Blanchard's book, *American Freedom and Catholic Power* (1949), especially pp. 127 ff.

generative power makes man akin to the Creator. In the words of Luther, the parents are the "masks" of God. He could create children directly, without the sex life of man. But he does not want it so. He wants man and woman to unite in order that his creation may be preserved.

In the Old Testament, a castrated person was not permitted to become a member of the church of God. Nor was a castrated animal considered to be fit for sacrifice in the temple.

On the other hand, we cannot object to the theory that some people because of physical or mental defects should not produce children. If sterilization is the only means to prevent this, or if it is of real help to the subject, it is important that, if the operation is undertaken, he should be fully informed of what it means. In case of mental deficiency, those closest of kin should be notified.

In recent years the science of genetics has discovered the possibility of conception by artificial insemination. Its purpose is to solve the problem of a childless marriage. From a purely naturalistic point of view it may be of little importance where the sperm comes from, provided it comes from a healthy male. But this practice raises a serious religious and ethical problem.

The unity of man and wife in marriage is manifested in their child. A child resulting from artificial insemination has a natural father whose physical and psychological traits he inherits, different from the husband of such a marriage. A man who provides sperm for insemination has violated



the principle of fatherhood because he will be the parent of a child whom he does not know and to whom he is not allowed to give fatherly care. A woman who conceives by this process is guilty of adultery because she is the mother of a child who is not of her husband. The child born of artificial insemination is the victim of a wrong. It deprives him of the right to know his father. If this practice spreads and is concealed it introduces an element of uncertainty into society. It may make all children suspicious, especially those who grow up in a family with only one child.

The episcopal letter referred to above takes also into consideration homologous insemination, i.e. between man and wife, saying the church believes that no ethical problem arises from it. This is not the place to discuss whether such a practice could effectively overcome some natural impediment of conception. But if insemination is practiced while man and wife are separated, the public—and also the child if he should learn about the separation of his parents at this particular time—is tempted to entertain serious suspicion as to the moral integrity of the wife, unless the situation is explained to the persons concerned. Yet this type of explanation is next to impossible for a sensitive man or woman.

The law of capital punishment has become quite problematical in recent times, especially since some states have abolished it altogether. In the Scriptures, the law is clearly stated in Genesis 9:6, and is implicitly expressed in Matthew 5:21 f., and Romans 12:4. Any objection to



capital punishment based on the Fifth Commandment is evidently a patent misuse of the law of God: for the law was given to Israel as means to eliminate the evil from the midst of the people. We do not violate the principle of "reverence for life" when we condemn a murderer to be killed. Civil law delivers the murderer over to the executioner because the state wants everyone to respect and revere the life of his fellow-men and because it is rightly concerned for the safety of all its citizens. Capital punishment does not contradict, but rather upholds the principle of reverence for life. Naturally it should be applied sparingly by any government and then only in case a man has been convicted of murder on clear and indisputable evidence.

A word about self-defense may be in order here. According to Scripture, as quoted above, he who takes the life of his fellow-man has forfeited his own life. Consequently he who kills such a person before he can carry out his evil intentions, in defending either himself or the life of someone else, rightly executes the judgment of divine justice.

Some might want to contradict the above statement on the authority of Jesus when he said: "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil" in Matthew 5:39. The passage quoted is a part of the discussion commencing with Matthew 5:20 and extending to Matthew 7:23. The theme of the whole discourse is "the higher righteousness" which Jesus wants his disciples to demonstrate in their

lives. The term is evidently not to be equated with the righteousness of faith, as set forth by Paul. Rather it designates the conduct of the disciples as acceptable to God. As Jesus proceeds, he constantly compares the will and commandments of God with the distortion the commandments have suffered in the hands of the teachers of the law. Over against the atomistic and casuistic interpretation of the law on the part of the teachers, Jesus lays emphasis on the will of God as a unified whole. Our Father in heaven is not interested in how many miles we might accompany a stranger through a barren and unsafe country, but he challenges us to bear one another's burden all the time. By so doing we shall fulfil the law of Christ. This is true of every pointed statement in the Sermon on the Mount. The sayings of Jesus must not be turned into a new legal code, for the "letter" always has a killing effect. Each statement is intended to drive home to us the whole will of God. His own life is after all the best and only reliable commentary on the Sermon on the Mount. While he willingly laid down his life "as a ransom for many" he did not turn the other cheek to the officer who struck him with the palm of his hand, nor did he refuse to swear an oath when the high priest challenged him to do so.<sup>5</sup> In this respect the ethic of the Quakers, Mennonites, or of Tolstoy is not the ethic which Jesus practiced.

The fact that our life is rooted in God not merely in nature, that he is Lord over us all, calls us not only to live

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<sup>5</sup> Matt. 5:34; 25:63 f.

unto him, but also to die unto him. Neither the unchecked will to live nor the denial of life takes into account the true will of God. Living or dying we are the servants of the Lord. As long as God extends our time we are under the divine imperative to work untiringly for his kingdom, realizing that at his time he will call us to our rest. In the Christian life, as demonstrated by Paul, joy in life and joy in death are basically one.

## Bodies Are Important, Too

For a long time Christian anthropology has been under the sway of the psychological dualism of Greek thought. According to Plato, the body is the lower part of man, the soul his higher part. The body is a prison house for the soul, and death is the great liberator of the true nature of man. This view, however, is thoroughly unscriptural. According to Scripture, God created not only man's soul but also his body. In the language of the psalmist, God has fearfully and wonderfully made man in his mother's womb. Likewise, the Incarnation is the strongest evidence of the unscriptural attitude of all Platonists ancient and modern.

Since God has created man as a psychosomatic being, sin is not conditioned by man's corporeal nature. The first man did not sin because he was a corporeal being, nor is sin propagated through the urges arising in the bodily nature of man. We must not equate concupiscence with sexual pleasure. This Catholic, ascetic view has no basis in Scripture. The real and great sins of life are the sins of the

spirit—man's egocentric will, his self-assertion at any cost over against God.

As a precious gift of God, the body has a share in the redemption wrought by Christ Jesus. Scripture states quite plainly that the forgiveness of sins is a power cleansing the habits and activities of the body (I Corinthians 6:9-11). Baptism, as Luther says in the *Large Catechism*, promises me "... that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in body and soul. For this reason two things are done in baptism, viz. the body which can apprehend nothing but the water is sprinkled, and the word is spoken for the soul to apprehend. . . . We therefore have no greater jewel in body and soul, for thereby we are made holy and are saved, which otherwise no kind of life, no work upon earth, could attain." Redeemed by Christ, the members of the body are to be put into Christian service. Rightly we ask the Lord:

Take my hands, and let them move  
At the impulse of Thy love;  
Take my feet, and let them be  
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing  
Always, only, for my King;  
Take my lips, and let them be  
Filled with messages from Thee.

The body also has the promise of eternal life. The Christian hope is not adequately expressed merely by belief in the immortality of the soul. The current notion of immortality is a Platonic concept. The Christian hope centers in the resurrection of the dead. Of this blessed

hope the Lord's Supper bears witness, for as Luther says, our mortal bodies are to be nourished to life eternal through the immortal food of the body and blood of Christ placed in our mouth.<sup>1</sup> In the Supper there is no feeding of the soul unless the body also receives the elements of the sacrament.

As a part of nature the body shares, since the Fall, in the destructibility of natural life. Pain, disease, and death are the common experience of all mankind. We maintain life only by a constant struggle. As Christians we accept this order as an expression of the righteousness of God who is justly displeased with our sins. But precisely because we accept our burden from him we also accept from him the means which he provides to halt the destruction of life. He has not promised us to maintain our lives without food nor has he given us assurance to help us in times of trouble without the use of medicine. A mere passive attitude is not the Christian answer, either in health or in sickness. The art of healing is a gracious gift of God. Sickness, like any other adversity, is a call to action, but also to prayer, challenging us to practice the prayer and work of the Christian life. It is not Christian confidence in God but rather the mechanistic view of life which might seriously paralyze man's energy in days of sickness. Nor does the Christian willingness to die interfere with a determined struggle against sickness as a messenger of death. Knowing that our time is in God's hand, we do not

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<sup>1</sup> *E.A.*, VI, 476.



lose courage even though we cannot halt the final destruction of our life. Fear, on the other hand, is a dangerous counsellor, a planner of misconceived hygiene, and an inventor of cheap medicine.

The same course of action is to be pursued with respect to nervous and mental disorders. In a way they are more dangerous because they threaten the very center of our being. Yet the mental and physical are interdependent. Hence the care for the soul must go hand in hand with a proper care for the body. It makes little difference whether the disorder is caused by a mental factor or by an injury to a physical organ of the body.

Essentially the same attitude must be maintained with respect to a mental or nervous disorder that seems to have its origin in a supernatural evil power, as in the case of the "possessed" in the New Testament. Like Jesus, we may face such a person realizing that the stronger One is on our side and properly care for him as is said in Mark 5:15 of the possessed whom the Lord had healed.

As a means for the development of the body a word about athletics may be added here. Sport has a twofold purpose. First, it means training and disciplining the body that it may be a strong and willing instrument of the spirit. Second, it creates a feeling of pleasure for both the active as well as passive participant. In this way, training and play co-operate in the moral education of man, for courage, for willingness of sacrifice, for devotion toward a common goal. Sport has rendered a much better service to American



and British youth than military training, for instance, to the Germans. Sport, therefore, has a rightful place in the Christian life. Paul considered the racing and boxing of the Greek youth to be a proper illustration of the race that is set before the Christians. As Christians, however, we are aware of the fact that other means are required for training our youth in godliness. A Christian cannot make sport the ruling content of life. Especially the commercializing of sport proves that for many life has lost its great and compelling content.

## Time and Eternity

Time is said to be the greatest mystery of our existence. What, then, is time?

According to Kant, time and space do not belong to objects apart from their being known. They are rather the universal forms under which all perceptive experience is known. Both space and time belong to the mind as forms of perceptive arrangement. This shows that in Kantian philosophy reason is the great legislator of the universe.

Luther's concept of time was in partial agreement with that developed by Kant. Time, says Luther, "is a numeration of movement . . . Where there is no number there is no time . . . Only a rational being, then, can number and understand time."<sup>1</sup> In contrast to Kant, however, Luther maintained a strong belief in a theological realism. Space and time, according to Scripture, are objective entities having their origin in the creative activity of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Our article "Luther's Interpretation of Genesis I-III" in *The Lutheran Church Quarterly*, January, 1948, p. 65.

Not man but God has laid down the laws of nature. Space is characterized by extension, time by succession, creating distance and interval, and separating cause and effect. On the other hand, eternity is marked by the concept of simultaneity; cause and effect, operation and the operated are coincidental. Eternity, therefore, is the great now and here, the moment which neither has to come nor which passes away.

The New Testament makes a distinction between *chronos* and *kairos*. The former is, as it were, the framework of life, while *kairos* signifies the decisive moment which is fraught with eternal import. In the Incarnation of the Son of God, the *eschaton* was revealed in time and space, and because the "final" is here, man is called to make a final decision, as is shown by the words of Jesus at the beginning of his ministry: "The *kairos* is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."<sup>2</sup>

In comparison with this biblical emphasis on time, mysticism knows nothing of such a decision. It knows nothing of the Creator, or of the Redeemer, or of sin. It has no understanding of history as a place where a final decision is made. With the mystics, everything is an evolutionary process.

For the Christian, time has a threefold meaning.

Because we have our existence in time, our life is terminated. We are like the candles on the altar which, while

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<sup>2</sup> Mark 1:15.

burning, destroy themselves — in the midst of life we are in death. "Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all its sons away." We experience God as the fire consuming our lives.

Time is also an expression of divine grace. The message that there still is time means that "The Lord . . . is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."<sup>3</sup> It is for our own salvation that we do not drop dead at once when we have sinned but that, according to a divine decree, time separates the harvest from the sowing season.

Time also implies the idea of responsibility. The Word of God challenges us "to redeem the time," to work while it is day, to agree with our adversary quickly while we are still on the way with him, to do good to all men, "but especially to those that are of the household of faith," and so forth.

Considering these challenges, the sanctification of time becomes a matter of first importance. Yet, on the one hand, we all too often simply waste, steal, and kill time. On the other hand, we permit ourselves to be constantly rushed and consumed by business and social activities.

As to its formal aspect, we experience time as a cycle of hours, days, weeks, months, and years.

Every day is a gracious gift of God. The fact that I live today is not something that stands to reason. "My times are in Thy hand!" To make the right beginning is a matter

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<sup>3</sup> II Pet. 3:9.

of great importance — not just to stumble into the day, but rather to be prepared for the various demands of it. The following prayer might well be in our hearts and on our lips every morning: “. . . that all our doings, being ordered by Thy governance, may be righteous in Thy sight.” The same holds true with respect to the end of the day. Scripture contains many a serious warning against the sins of darkness. The hours of night in our modern civilization are fraught with a great many temptations, waiting to destroy the integrity of the individual and disrupt the life of the family.

For a Christian all days are holy. By his incarnation the Son of God has hallowed all time and space. The distinction between the “holy” and the “profane” has lost its meaning. The Sabbath of the Old Testament is abrogated by Christ. The Christian Sunday is not the Old Testament Sabbath transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week. The observance of the first day of the week as the day of Christ’s resurrection is a testimony of our faith and is also conditioned by a practical need of the church: to hear and learn the Word of God. Therefore the loss of Sunday is not without serious consequences for any nation. On the other hand, the puritanic emphasis on abstention from work easily leads to legalism. As always, the evangelical Christian should be guided here by Augustine’s basic principle of Christian ethics: “Love and do what you want to do.” Sunday commemorates the resurrection of our Lord. The other days of his earthly life set

aside by a long tradition of the Christian church, have for an evangelical Christian the same meaning as Sunday. Christmas, Good Friday, and Ascension Day are no less "holy" than an ordinary Sunday. Since they are only an annual occurrence, they have, in fact, a greater significance for the Christian life.

This evangelical conception of Sunday is clearly expressed in the confessions of the Lutheran church.<sup>4</sup> On this point, Calvin was basically in agreement with Luther and Melancthon. In his *Institutes* he says that Sunday and the other solemn days of the Christian assemblies are "appointed for the hearing of the Word, for the administration of the sacraments, and for public prayer" and that he would not ". . . lay so much stress on the septenary number" that he would "oblige the church to an invariable adherence to it."<sup>5</sup> The *Westminster Confession* and its followers, therefore, have modified the position of Calvin to a considerable degree when they maintain that God "by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment, binding all men in all ages, has particularly appointed one day in seven for a Sabbath."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Augsburg Confession*, Art. XXVIII, 58; *Large Catechism*.

<sup>5</sup> Book II, Chap. VII, 34.

<sup>6</sup> Art. XXI, 7.

## Vocations

Nature forces us to work because it does not provide food and shelter without toil and labor. In addition, no individual or nation ever reaches the level of cultural life without concentrated effort because all cultural life presupposes the shaping of nature according to the intellectual and esthetic concepts of the mind. For this reason nature is a servant of the Creator who willed from the beginning that man should "subdue" and "dress" the earth. In working, then, man takes part in the creative activity of God. Although God could accomplish all things without man, it is his will and design, as Luther says, to preserve the world and all that is therein through the labor and toil of man. All creatures are his "masks and disguises" whom he desires to co-operate with him.<sup>1</sup> Work, therefore, has the dignity of a divine order. This dignity we experience in the joy inherent in work. But work is not only joy. While working, we consume the vitality of our life, and we often work in vain. In work we also experience the

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<sup>1</sup> *E.A.* II, 15.



limitations which God has placed upon us; we become painfully aware of the law of death that rules all life.

### *The calling*

Most labor is performed in the calling of our life. A true appreciation of our vocation or calling, therefore, is of special significance for a Christian.

For a proper understanding of the term "calling" the passage in I Corinthians 7:17-24 is highly significant. Here the Apostle uses the Greek word *klesis* in a double sense, applying it to both the station of the earthly life and the call to eternal life. This apostolic doctrine was rediscovered by Luther when, in the so-called September Testament of 1522, he translated *klesis* as *Beruf* (vocation). According to the Bible and Reformation theology, the stations of both this life and of the life to come are grounded in the gracious will of God. I am called by God to the position which I hold in this world. Luther's teaching of the call is primarily gospel because to him the call is first a gift, and only in the second place a duty. The whole concept is a direct outcome of the doctrine of justification: faith in the atonement is bound up with faith in the providence of God. Through his providential deeds God approaches me in order that he may confer on me his greatest gift, the forgiveness of sins. While in medieval theology monasticism had laid exclusive claim to the term "calling," it now became a pregnant expression of the new evangelical view of life: that a Christian may render

service to God in any station of life, be it the highest or the meanest. Thus the Reformation ushered in a concept of work unparalleled in the history of civilization.<sup>2</sup> Hand in hand with this stress on the dignity of the calling went a new emphasis on man's responsibility. Luther's interpretation of the First Article is a milestone in the history of Christian ethics: "I believe that God has . . . given . . . me . . . my raiment, food, home, and family, and all my property . . . for which I am in duty bound to thank, praise, serve, and obey Him." These words sounded the deathknell to the monastic vow of chastity, poverty, and obedience (to the hierarchy). This new concept of life and vocation we find also expressed, in classical form, in the great hymn of the Alsatian cleric, Martin Schalling (1532-1608), "With all my heart I love Thee, Lord," which reads in the second stanza:

Yea, Lord, 'twas Thy free bounty gave  
My body, soul and what I have  
In this poor life of labor;  
O grant that I may through Thy grace  
Use all my powers to show Thy praise  
And serve and help my neighbor.

Luther's rediscovery of the biblical teaching of the calling also furnished Melancthon with a theology on which he could build his argument on civil affairs in Article XVI of the *Augsburg Confession*.<sup>3</sup> Contrary to

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Einar Billing, *Our Calling*, translated from the Swedish by Conrad Bergendoff, 1947.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. also Articles XXVI and XXVII.

monasticism and the "fanatics" of the sixteenth century, this idea of the *Beruf* put the Lutheran (and genuinely Reformed) church in a positive relation to the state and secular culture, as witness best of all the progressiveness of Protestant European and American civilization. As Christianity proved the sole bearer of civilization in the dark days of the early Middle Ages so Protestantism became the cradle of modern culture.

However, we do not want to close our eyes to a certain kind of danger that was lurking in the background of Protestantism from its very inception and which long since has come out in the open. Our reference is to the wide sway of secularism of labor in modern life. With the reformers the "call" and the "calling" were an organized whole, both being grounded in the gracious will of God. In the age of reason faith in God became a system of rational metaphysics. Kant expelled God from nature and history. His ethics is coldly formalistic, lacking entirely the concreteness of the divine imperative. The ethics of positivism, finally, is purely conventional. Under the impact of this development the biblical concept of vocation has been utterly secularized. In Kantian philosophy it has become a matter of personal duty and honor, in modern life a mere economic necessity.

Another danger inherent in Protestant thought is that of compromise, as demonstrated by the early capitalism of the Calvinistic countries, where the social responsibility, as felt in this kind of capitalism, bore witness to the force

of the Christian ethic. The Christian idea of our vocation is furthermore imperiled by the questionable character of many occupations which are not only not serving the welfare of humanity but which are actually promoting the cause of evil, and also by the soullessness of work in the big industries. Under the influence of these tendencies, Protestantism is exposed to the dangers of false solutions which are offered in the world-renouncing ideals of a resurgent monasticism and the world-reforming crusade of the social gospel movement. Both underestimate the impact of sin on all historical life.<sup>4</sup>

The biblical concept of the calling makes short work of both the spirit of hopelessness and of fanatic reformatory zeal. Being called to eternal life in the calling of our earthly life we know that God's grace covers the past as well as the present. We know that we are holy, not empirically, but by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, and that "the forgiveness of sins is and ought to be the only sun in life."<sup>5</sup> In this way God gives us that "good conscience" which is necessary for the faithful pursuit of every calling. In addition, as the act of divine justification is an anticipation of the day of final judgment, so the idea of the calling has an eschatological implication. God not only calls us into the world but out of it as well. To be called by God means that he "hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints of light."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (1937).

<sup>5</sup> Billing, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Col. 1:12. Cf. Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Vol. II, p. 244.

## Abstinence and Enjoyment

Work exhausts our physical and mental resources. No one can work incessantly. Apart from sleep, we need time for rest and recreation. However, we cannot spend such a period in a vacuum. A content must be found for it. This necessity is the origin of games and play in which we desire nothing but pleasure.

The chief forms of satisfying our desire for pleasure are indoor and outdoor games, music, dancing, reading, and other entertainment. In addition, we take delight in festive attire, food, and drink. They are "festive" because they exceed that which is necessary. Alcoholic beverages, for example, are used not as a means of quenching thirst but for social reasons. The same applies to the habit of smoking.

What shall be the attitude of the Christian in these matters?

First, there is the way of the ascetic, resolutely condemning indulgence in any of these things. However, apart from many inconsistencies, this position is fraught

with a real moral danger. While "straining at a gnat," the ascetic may easily "swallow a camel." It is also next to impossible to maintain. Having flesh and blood, we cannot divorce ourselves from the demands which nature exerts upon us. By restricting ourselves to that which is necessary, we may never take part in any festive event.

The puritanic way of life also contradicts the example of Jesus. He was not an ascetic, as the puritans of his day complained. Believing in God the Creator, we, like him, cannot despise the good gifts which nature provides. The esthetic sense belongs to our personality, as God has created it.

On the other hand, the hours of recreation are no moratorium on ethics. As the term indicates, recreation means to "re-create." When we return weaker, exhausted, with our natural powers impaired or our moral standard lowered, we have misused our leisure.

The church must be grateful for every one of its members who, for the sake of greater service, never indulges in pleasure for its own sake. Yet Christian ethics has a positive goal. We are not called to avoid dance, drink, or the theater, but rather to obey God. We practice self-discipline in order to enjoy the natural amusements with a pure heart and a clean mind. For example, the indiscriminate condemnation of the use of alcohol, as is customary among the prohibitionists, is an oversimplification of the problem involved. Though we may rightly blame the social habit of drinking for many of the evils of our day, a



“dry” country is of necessity not a better country, as the Mohammedan world may teach.

The word “ascetic” never occurs in the Greek version of the Old Testament; it is first found in the apocryphal books of II and IV Maccabees. In the New Testament it occurs only once, in Acts 24:16, while the subject matter is found discussed in such passages as I Corinthians 9:25-27; Galatians 5:24, and so on. The emphasis on asceticism gained momentum in the early church under the impact of the dualistic philosophy of Greece with its stress on the soul over against the body. Traditionally it implies fasting and abstinence from the pursuit of pleasure and total or partial abstinence from sexual activity.<sup>1</sup> In the medieval church this view gave rise to the development and glorification of monasticism with its emphasis on merit. The new understanding of justification dealt the death blow to the idea of asceticism in the churches of the Reformation.

From the evangelical point of view we must be guided in our evaluation of asceticism by the following principles:

1. Asceticism is not rooted in a divine command; rather it is a free exercise on the part of the Christian.
2. It does not establish a merit. On the contrary, it is an expression of gratitude. A Christian may forego a certain type of pleasure in order that he may have more to give of his time and possessions to God.
3. Asceticism may be employed as a means of training

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. in the Old Testament Ex. 19:15; I Sam. 21:5, or the vow of the Nazarites Num. 6:1 ff; Judg. 13 *et se*.

the body and mind so as to make them willing instruments of Christian service.

4. The form and content of asceticism are variable, depending on the demands of time.

This leads us to a brief discussion of the problem of adiaphora.

Derived from the Greek word *diapheronta* plus the negative prefix *a*, the word means things which in themselves are neither good nor evil, because they are neither commanded nor forbidden by God.

The problem is typical of a legalistic trend of mind, a way of thinking which does not regard the Christian life as a whole, but rather breaks it up into "cases." Luther removed this problem from ethics altogether by his teaching of the calling. "A householder," he once remarked at table, "says to his servants, 'Be faithful and do whatsoever I have commanded you; otherwise you may eat, drink and dress as you please.' In the same manner God is not concerned with what we eat or how we dress. All these things are free. Church ceremonies and adiaphora must not be regarded as necessary or profitable to salvation."<sup>2</sup>

Thrice in history the church was especially confronted with this particular problem of ethics.

In the apostolic church the controversy centered around the validity of the Mosaic law for the Christian community. Should the converts from the Gentile world be taught to observe circumcision, the law of clean and unclean food,

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<sup>2</sup> E.A., LX, 390 f.

the church calendar of Israel? Or could the Christians, without committing a sin, buy at the market the meat of animals that had been offered in part to an idol? With one grand sweep Paul settled the whole problem, stating: "All things are yours, . . . and ye are Christ's."<sup>3</sup> At the same time he commands Christians to exercise their liberty in the spirit of charity.

In the age of the Reformation adiaphorism became an issue as a result of the Augsburg and the Leipzig Interims. These documents were drawn up by theologians of both churches as an interim measure until a general council could be held to accomplish a reunion of the Lutherans with Roman Catholics. Therefore the content of the Interim gave grave offence to the faithful among the Lutherans. Flacius, one of their leaders, established himself squarely on the principle later adopted in Article X of the *Formula of Concord*, that we should not yield to the enemies in regard to such adiaphora, or such ceremonies and church rites which are neither commanded nor forbidden in God's Word. This principle is still valid and should guide our church today in the movement for church union. We should neither yield in matters of church government in order to win recognition from the Anglicans, nor make concessions with respect to church art in order to appease the stanch Presbyterians, adiaphoristic as these things may be as such.

It was, however, the puritanic and pietistic bent of mind

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<sup>3</sup> I Cor. 3:21, 23

that made the adiaphora a real issue for ethics in the Lutheran church. To the Pietists of Halle the commonly accepted forms of social life such as dancing, card playing, and the theater, were thoroughly distasteful. They rejected them as incompatible with the Christian way of life, whereas their orthodox opponents considered these things to be ethically neutral. On this side of the Atlantic the older Gettysburg school was in heartfelt agreement with the fathers of Halle. Under the impact of their puritanic environment they went a step further, rejecting even the elements of art in the historical service of the Lutheran church as detrimental to evangelical piety. Thus the "American Lutheranism" which they espoused was much closer in spirit and practice to the Puritanism of New England than to the Lutheranism of the *Book of Concord*. In matters of Sunday observance, for example, these "American Lutherans" were not evangelical Christians at all but Sabbatarians.<sup>4</sup>

We reject this type of piety not because we are blind to the danger inherent in the Hollywood interpretation of life — the danger is real and the situation is grave — but because the Christian life cannot be broken up into fragments. The problem of Sunday observance cannot be solved in a legalistic manner. We cannot by legislation teach people gladly to hear and learn the Word of God. The proverbial Scottish Sunday—a day of gloom and

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<sup>4</sup>Cf. S. S. Schmucker, *Definite Synodical Platform* (1855); for a similar attitude among Scandinavian Lutherans in America, cf. J. M. Rohne, *Norwegian American Lutheranism* (1926), pp. 223 ff.

boredom—is just as unchristian as the German Sunday spent on excursions, in the theater, and in dancing. The hours of recreation are given us by God that our spiritual and physical self may be strengthened. Whatever will serve this purpose cannot be truthfully denied on Sunday. Conversely, whatever is contrary to the God-given purpose of life is sinful not only on Sunday but also on any weekday. Undoubtedly, the wide-open Sunday is a sad manifestation of our secularized age. The problem is articulated by the low type of amusement which the public craves. But we must not look toward the state for stricter laws. They avail little or nothing. The solution lies in a return to God and in a raising of the cultural level of our whole society.

## The Meaning of Suffering

All our activity meets with opposition from within, originating in the frailty of our nature, and from without, caused by other men or by the resistance inherent in the objects of our work. In addition, there is the special suffering of the Christian. We are engaged in a continual struggle with flesh and blood and with the hostility of the world and of Satan.

A theocentric interpretation of suffering prevails throughout the Scriptures.

In the Old Testament suffering is regarded as a "smiting" of God or as a "chastening" of the Lord. To suffer, therefore, means to be "tested" by God, as set forth in the Book of Job. The height of evangelical faith, however, is sounded in Psalm 73:25-26; "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

The real significance of suffering was disclosed in the life of Jesus who was made perfect through suffering.



Since Calvary, suffering has been revealed as the way of God for the redemption of mankind. He who suffers is made free from himself and thereby free for God. Paul speaks of suffering as a "sacrament" by which we are united with Christ. This gives unexcelled dignity to the cross-bearing of the believers. The suffering of the Christian reaches its depth in vicarious suffering because of the sins of others. To be a priest of God means to intercede and suffer for other men. Yet we must not obliterate the difference between the cross of Jesus and our own cross. He suffered, the guiltless for the guilty, while our suffering is never pure because of the continual sinfulness of our life. Luther's statement applies especially here: Life is not being godly but becoming godly, not being whole but becoming whole, not a status but a process, not a rest but an exercise; it is not yet done and finished, but it is in the making; it is not the end, but it is on the way."<sup>1</sup> To this end God in his paternal love uses suffering as a means of correction and chastisement in order to strengthen us in our faith and love toward him. Suffering, as Luther says, is the "salt" which seasons this life just as salt makes food palatable and tasty.<sup>2</sup> In training and trying us all our life long, God "effects what you in baptism have desired, viz., that you may become free from sin, may die and rise again at the Last Day, and so fulfil your baptism."<sup>3</sup> In this manner we learn the Christian art of patience, the

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<sup>1</sup> Ficker, *op. cit.*, II, 267.

<sup>2</sup> P.E., I, 142.

<sup>3</sup> P.E., I, 61.

Greek equivalent of which means subordination (*hypo-mone*) to the will of God. In the language of Kierkegaard, suffering is God's way of blowing out the lantern of man's self-complacency and pride. It is his way of training us for eternity, for "there is no obedience without suffering, no faith without obedience, no eternity without faith."<sup>4</sup> We, therefore, "glory in tribulation," knowing that "all things work together for good to them that love God." Thus are we comforted in sorrow and by faith we become "more than conquerors through him that loved us."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *The Gospel of Suffering* (1948), p. 64.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. 8:37. For a classic on the relationship between sin and suffering see Luther's treatise, *The Fourteen of Consolation*, P.E., I, 103. See also the remarkable chapter "Hallowed Suffering" in Lilje's *The Valley of the Shadow* (1950), pp. 86 ff.

*Part Five*

The Christian in the World



## My Neighbor

Human life is naturally and historically conditioned by the interaction of people, one upon another. We live through one another and in relation to and dependence upon one another. To be fruitful in itself, my life must become fruitful in the lives of others. We cannot live for God any other way than by living for our fellow-men. The second commandment is like unto the first, as Jesus has said. No one can love God and hate his brother. We are neighbors one of another by a God-willed relationship.

We are related to one another in the forms in which the historical life of mankind is expressed: the family order and economic and political orders. And we are related one to another in a special way through divine providence which, apart from these orders, brings men together as neighbors and friends and makes them mutually dependent.

In the Bible the word "neighbor" does not signify the intangible universality of man. Love, according to Scripture, is not cosmopolitan or eccentric. Brotherly love, as

commanded in the New Testament, is concentric; it is love not for all but for each one. The golden rule, as laid down by our Lord, is not a lesson in philanthropy. While the ethic of the rabbi is egocentric, Jesus establishes a new concentric order orientated around the "thou." To the question, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus replies with the question, "Which now . . . was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?"

The problem of neighborly love, therefore, cannot be solved in the spirit of ethical casuistry. As always, Roman Catholic teaching of "ordered love" in this connection is wholly alien to the mind of our Lord. Thomas Aquinas, for example, discusses at length the question who is to be loved more—parent or child, father or mother, and so on.<sup>1</sup> Such an approach is thoroughly egocentric. But Jesus is opposed to every kind of egoism, be it of an individual or of a group (family, labor union, nation). On the other hand, the New Testament fully recognizes a man's special obligation to those who are nearest of kin. "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel," says the Apostle.<sup>2</sup> In the same manner, Paul admonishes his readers "to do good to all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith."<sup>3</sup>

While the neighbor is given us objectively by circum-

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<sup>1</sup> *Summa*, II, II, 26.

<sup>2</sup> I Tim. 5:8. See also Matt. 15:3 ff; Rom. 9:3; Eph. 5:22 ff; Col. 3:18 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. 6:10.

stances, friendship is a very personal matter. Unlike the help which I must render a person who lives next door to me when I see him in distress, friendship does not result from outward necessity. Rather we are drawn to certain people by an inner impulse. Friendship is a natural phenomenon; it is based on delight which we take in the personality of another. Lest it degenerate, however, friendship must develop into an ethical relationship where both partners recognize a mutual responsibility. Though rooted in a natural affection, friendship needs the cleansing power of divine love. This ethical element is clearly expressed in the words of Jesus when he says that he has made known to the disciples the things which he has heard from the Father, and that they are his friends if they do whatsoever he has commanded them. In the same manner Abraham, who believed the Lord, is called in Scripture "the friend of God," who had called him from his father's house.

Neighborly fellowship finds its realization in our co-operation with the "natural orders." In this co-operation Christian love knows no limits, but is ready to serve each person who becomes a neighbor. Like secular philanthropy, Christian love is universal in scope. However, unlike the former, Christian love is not general benevolence. It is personal, active sharing because it is brotherly love. Its work cannot be institutionalized. Nor is it satisfied with saving the souls of men. Rather it embraces the whole



of human existence as it does, for instance, in the healing miracles of Jesus.

Christian love is theocentric love; it looks upon man from God's point of view. Consequently, the social work of the church must always go hand in hand with the proclamation of the Word. Love is priestly in character. Entering into responsibility for others it becomes vicarious. Like the love of Christ, it encounters sin not with weak tolerance or even cynicism, but with holy anger as exemplified in Jesus, and it forgives and suffers as he did. Christian love is neither altruism nor egoism. As Althaus has said, "It is fulfilling a divinely established relationship. We give ourselves not to others but to God."

This understanding of Christian service may also guide a person who is caught in tensions which may arise between his loyalty to his family and his allegiance to the brethren in the faith. Having given himself to God, he will try in all cases to act in accordance with the divine will. Yet while God wills our sanctification at all times, his will is to be done by us in a concretely given situation, which may vary according to circumstances.<sup>4</sup>

Christian love is real when it can grow at any time into love toward an enemy. While in the Old Testament this type of love is at times limited to members of Israel,<sup>5</sup> Jesus laid down the categorical command, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you." In order to interpret

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. for example, Matt. 15:4 ff. with 12:46 ff.; or Luke 8:35 ff. with 9:59 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Prov. 25:21 f; Ex. 23:4 f; Lev. 19:18; Deut. 23:6.

Jesus correctly, three facts must be taken into consideration here: (1) the Sermon on the Mount is the proclamation of a new aeon; (2) this aeon is one not of duty but of grace; (3) it addresses itself to the disciples. This means that love toward the enemy is both a gift and a commandment which will be realized in the kingdom of God. As love toward the enemy, Christian love bears witness to the very love with which God has loved us.

Finally, Christian fellowship is possible only where sincerity of heart and truthfulness of speech prevail. The Bible classifies the habitual liar among the worst offenders of the moral law. My duty to speak the full truth, however, is limited by the relation in which I stand to the other person. In our dealings with people we need the moral strength to keep a secret as well as to speak the truth with boldness. In addition, we are justified in holding back the full truth from those who are not intellectually competent. There are also private matters which a person is at liberty to keep secret. Concerning them, no outsider has a right to know the truth. They are not his business. Inquisitiveness is a bad habit. The moral problem, however, begins when we feel that in the interest of the other person's weakness we pass the bounds between tactful silence and positive deception. As men actually are, such action will be unavoidable at times. But the question always remains whether we have the moral right to limit another person's freedom and responsibility in facing the reality of life. A deceptive attitude destroys mutual confidence and fellow-

ship. Yet can a nervous person be told the whole truth? Or is it more charitable at times to withhold from him those things that will worry him? Can a doctor, for example, tell the truth to a person afflicted with an incurable disease? First, a responsible physician will realize the relative value of every diagnosis. He may be mistaken. Secondly, the character and condition of the patient must be taken into consideration. While in one person the truth will destroy every resistance which otherwise he could marshal against the approaching crisis, it may not have the same bad effect on another. Especially a Christian would like to know the truth in order to prepare himself for the great hour of death. Each case must be decided in the light of its own peculiar circumstances. A doctor need not be blunt, but neither should he conceal the truth.

Likewise, in the political struggle among nations, especially in the time of war, the enemy has no right to know the truth. To deceive him is indispensable for self-protection. Propaganda is subject to the same ethical standard as the armed conflict. But such conflict can never be an end in itself. Rather diplomacy and war must serve the cause of peace. This places upon the political leaders of the nations the obligation of striving earnestly to discourage the rampant rise of lying and deception. A victorious nation may demobilize its armies and scuttle its warships but it has no control over the minds of the men whom it has poisoned with its vicious propaganda. Nations, like individuals, cannot dispense with the power

of truth and confidence. A statesman must not jeopardize these without pressing necessity.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Relating his experience in a Nazi prison, Bishop Lilje mentions that the Gestapo took advantage of the unconditional veracity of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Holding that the truth must be told in all conditions of life, they fell easy prey to the German Secret Police who used them for spying on their fellow-prisoners. *The Valley of the Shadow* (1950), pp. 67 f.

## What About Sex?

Sex in itself is neither moral nor immoral; it is amoral. Sex in itself is natural, as much a part of man as eating and drinking. It is what man does with it that determines whether it will be a blessing or a curse, whether it will make or ruin him. Sex is the creative part in man, making him akin to the Creator himself. Everyone should make sure that it is a creative, rather than chaotic, force in his life.

In animals, sex functions are limited to certain periods of their lives. Mating takes place solely for the production of offspring. In a man, on the other hand, sex is a factor which determines his whole life. Unlike the animal, man has a relatively continuous capacity for sexual activity.

The Old Testament has a high regard for sex. Through his sexual function, man is called to perpetuate the creative activity of God. Because of the racial concept of the Jews, to bring a child into the world meant to increase the number of God's people. Childlessness, therefore, was regarded as a divine curse. In Hosea, marriage is used

as a metaphor to describe God's relation to Israel. The Song of Solomon extols the virtue of marital faithfulness. On the other hand, the Old Testament also bears witness to the demonic element in sex as a means of man's brutal self-assertion. By nature man is unfit to be a member of the chosen people: it is only through circumcision that he is cleansed from the uncleanness of his flesh. Sex secretions are said to make a person ritually unclean so that he may "not enter into the congregation of the Lord."<sup>1</sup> The law contains numerous prohibitions which were to serve as a check on man's unbridled sexuality.

Essentially the same position is maintained in the New Testament. Our Lord himself showed a high regard for motherhood, and in the pastoral Epistles it is stated that a woman will be saved if she continues, by faith, in her God-given calling as a mother of children. Motherhood is a holy estate ordained of God. Yet like the Old Testament, the New also contains many serious warnings against all manner of unchastity and uncleanness. However, throughout the whole Bible emphasis is laid not on abstention but rather on the exercise of the sex function in harmony with its divinely ordered purpose.

### *Marriage*

Marriage has its root in the natural difference between male and female. It is based on Eros — a very personal

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<sup>1</sup> Lev. 15:16 ff.



delight in and affection for the marriage partner. This affection includes the whole self, the physical as well as the psychic nature of the other. The relation established by marriage, therefore, is unique. It is by nature restricted to one individual. Polygamy is a distortion of marriage. Moreover, this union is physical because it is sexual: "The twain shall be one flesh."

Marriage belongs to the original order of creation. It is the first and oldest form of social life. According to Jesus, its history divides itself into three periods: (1) marriage as willed by God in the beginning — the indissoluble union of one man and one woman; (2) married life under the law, marked by a compromise which recognized the right of divorce and permitted the practice of polygamy; (3) marriage in the Christian dispensation, where the original order of God is to be restored.

If Jesus has come to reaffirm the order of God, what was the position of Paul? Was marriage to him a "necessary evil," as some commentators on his First Letter to the Corinthians maintain? Whatever the real significance of this passage may be, it ought to be remembered that Paul, like Jesus, uses marriage as a symbol of the relation between Christ and the church. If the Apostle had actually regarded married life as something base, such a comparison would hardly have suggested itself to his mind. Moreover, a Christian who, like Paul, believes in God as the Creator of human life can never think lightly of marriage. Paul does not say that unmarried life is good while the

married state is evil. What he actually says is that the state of unmarried life may also be something good, and not in itself evil. In this respect there is no difference between Jesus and Paul. Yet the teaching of both is something revolutionary when we consider the reproach attached to childlessness both in Jewish and in Greek thought.

### *Marriage ceremony*

Since marriage is rooted in the order of creation the church is only indirectly concerned with the contracting of a marriage. The marriage ceremony is in no way essential to making a marriage valid. Instead, the principle of Roman law holds true also from the biblical point of view: *consensus facit nuptias* (the consent of the parties makes the marriage). In contrast to canon law, Luther emphatically states, "Since marriage is a wordly business, it behooves us pastors or ministers of the church not to attempt to order or govern anything connected with it, but to permit every city and land to continue its own use and custom in this connection."<sup>2</sup> Marriage is not a sacrament. The church was not charged by her Lord to solemnize marriages. The practice could be discontinued without destroying the work of the church. The solemnization of a marriage must not be put on the same level with the administration of baptism or the Lord's Supper.

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<sup>2</sup> P.E., VI, 225.

It is only a wholesome practice quite in keeping with the sentiment of faith which looks to God as the fountain of every blessing.

In both the United States and Canada the two different aspects, the religious and legal, must be carefully distinguished. The fact that a marriage solemnized by a minister is legally valid is conditioned by the will of the state. In this respect the pastor acts as an agent of the state, and not as a minister of the gospel.

### *Birth control*

Marriage serves a double purpose. It is the highest form of personal fellowship between two individuals: but it is also the instrument of propagation. Both purposes are essentially intertwined. From the ethical point of view marriage is normal only if entered with willingness to have children. Conversely, the desire to have children is ethically healthy only if grounded in a longing for a life-long fellowship of the man and the woman. Planned childlessness in marriage is just as unethical as planned parenthood outside of wedlock. Marriage and procreation cannot be divorced. This leads us to the problem of birth control. While the practice has been known from time immemorial, it has become a real problem in our own day because of the economic complexity of modern life. A large family seems to be incompatible with the standard of life which a person is required to maintain if he wants to succeed financially and socially. The problem is ac-

centuated through housing shortages and the ever-increasing demand for specialization in all walks of life. While thoughtful people everywhere realize the gravity of this issue, the sentiments of Christian people are still widely varied as to the proper means to be employed.

Four methods are possible in securing the desired effect. The first is abstinence. This practice has received the sanction of practically every Christian moralist. In the minority report of the Federal Council's Committee on Marriage and the Home it is stated that "it appears to these members of the committee to be the plain duty of the Christian church, when control of conception is necessary, to uphold the standard of abstinence as the ideal, recognizing it as a counsel of perfection." Yet this ascetic view is untenable. The Apostle Paul warns Christian people against it as a wile of the devil. The second method is the practice of *coitus interruptus*. Known from time immemorial, it has always been practiced in the Christian civilization of the West. The third method is the use of various contraceptives. It is this method that has proved to be especially controversial among Christian people, both Protestant and Roman Catholic church leaders rejecting it as unethical in no uncertain terms. A fourth method is the observance of the so-called rhythmic cycle, i.e. having intercourse only on those days when there is, from the biological point of view, the least likelihood of conception taking place. This method has been hailed with

a sigh of relief by both Protestant and Roman Catholic churchmen alike.<sup>3</sup>

In reality, this attitude on the part of professedly Christian leaders reveals painfully the inward untruthfulness of Christian legalism. In such controversial matters we must always guard against that hypocrisy which acts as though the point at issue were the preservation of some sacred principle whereas, upon closer examination, we find that it is only a question of difference in method.<sup>4</sup>

The end never justifies the means. If the desired end is wrong all means that may lead to it are wrong. For man sex is a lifelong function. It must have been so intended by the Creator. Certainly marriage is meant for procreation. But must every marriage be unrestrictedly fruitful? In all cultural life we are restricting, curbing, or even eliminating forces of nature, and by so doing we believe that we are true to the calling of God as expressed in Genesis 1:28. Should we leave only this important matter to chance, identifying this chance with divine providence? The word of Scripture stands that "Children are an heritage of the Lord and that the fruit

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<sup>3</sup> In his Encyclical Letter, *Casti Connubi*, dated December 23, 1930, Pope Pius XI said, "Nor are those considered as acting against nature who in the marriage state use their right in the proper manner, although on account of natural reasons, either of *time* (Italics are ours) or of defects, new life cannot be brought forth." Quoted from the English version distributed by the Catholic Truth Society of Canada, 2nd ed., p. 29. For a statement essentially in agreement with that of the Pope, cf. Walter Maier, *For Better Not For Worse* (1936), p. 396. For official pronouncements of various Protestant church bodies see A. D. Mattson, *Christian Ethics* (1936), pp. 370-379.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative* (1947), pp. 367 ff.



of the womb is his reward.<sup>5</sup>” Nevertheless, under the pressure of modern life it may become one’s duty to limit the number of children, i.e. to divorce physical fellowship from procreation. In so doing Christian people can never overlook the fact that they are putting asunder what God has joined together. Nor can they be unmindful of the fact that this practice can easily prostitute itself to the demonism of an unbridled passion. Knowing that whatever we do leads to something unnatural we are forcibly reminded here that “the fashion of this world” is inescapably sinful and that we live at all times only by the forgiveness of sins and by the hope of the redemption of our body.

### *Divorce*

The golden rule of married life is stated by the Apostle when he says, “Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you.”<sup>6</sup> Wherever this spirit is lacking marriage may easily end in divorce, for it is only by the power of God’s unconditioned forgiveness that human beings are ready and able to forgive unconditionally.

In the light of the gospel every divorce is contrary to the will of God and involves sin and guilt. When in the Old Testament dispensation Moses suffered men to write a bill of divorcement, it was merely for the hardness of

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<sup>5</sup> Ps. 127:3.

<sup>6</sup> Eph. 5:32.



man's heart. In a similar way, we would miss the real intentions of Jesus if we would try to build a legal system of divorce laws on the passages of the New Testament that bear on this problem.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the precise intentions of Jesus are not clearly revealed in the passages referred to, for the limiting clause "except it be for fornication" as found in Matthew, is missing in Mark and Luke. But granted that in the eyes of Jesus fornication is a legitimate reason for divorce, and the only one according to Paul, malicious desertion is also a disruption of the marriage bond, for it renders the benevolence which husband and wife owe each other impossible. If the unbelieving partner chooses to depart, the brother or sister is no longer bound to that individual. Of course, the pronouncement of the Apostle covers, strictly speaking, only a case where the conversion to the Christian faith causes the unbelieving partner to separate. However, these facts clearly show that the statements of divorce in the New Testament are conditioned by actual circumstances and that they must not be turned into a set of laws. Our Lord and his Apostle "legislated" neither on marriage nor on divorce. In all his sayings Christ wanted to describe the way of life that is to be realized by the power of the Spirit in the "new age." His words are not law in a society of unregenerate men. Hence the state, including all classes and conditions of people, but mostly unregen-

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<sup>7</sup> Matt. 5:21-32; 19:10; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; I Cor. 7:10-16, 39.

erate ones, cannot be governed by the "law of Christ," not even in matters of marriage and divorce. At the best it may try to uphold the words of Jesus as a principle to be observed by as many individuals as possible. The value of "strict" marriage laws may be at times of a questionable character since they may lead to a deliberate commission of those acts which are recognized as reasons for divorce.

In the last analysis the very alarming increase of the divorce rate in our country is a spiritual and not a legal problem. All this makes it the more mandatory for Christian people to base their lives squarely on the whole will of God. A marriage is secure only if the life of both partners is rooted in God, and it takes precisely two people to make marriage a success. If, then, one of the two should fail miserably, the other one may take refuge in the forgiveness of sins. Though a Christian will not seek a divorce he may be forced to accept it as the lesser of two evils, knowing that where sin abounds grace much more abounds. Likewise the question of remarriage of a divorced person must be seen in the same light.

Scriptural passages must not be interpreted as legal decisions. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus addresses himself to people living under the dispensation of the Old Testament. Paul, in advising a believing woman first not to depart from her husband and second, if she depart, to remain unmarried, evidently reckons with the

gospel as a power of reconciliation, which a second marriage would make impossible. Besides, the Apostle does not include the husband in this injunction, and in the case of a separation between an unbeliever and a believer he does not add the exhortation to remain unmarried.

This being so, in the New Testament we have no laws on remarriage of divorced people. Instead of being guided, therefore, by the legal concepts of "guilty" and "innocent" which are always relative among men, the church should rather try to discern spiritually the directives of Scripture. Here as always we must recognize the fact that human weakness and sinfulness have rendered all orders of life relative. In most cases remarriage is a decent solution because the gift of abstinence is most likely rarer in a widowed or divorced person than in the virgin state of life.

### *Masturbation*

Masturbation is self-abuse, that is, genital manipulation by hands, clothing, and the like. It is a practice which is very common both in men and women. It occurs in children and especially in the state of adolescence, but is by no means restricted to younger people.

There is no clear trace of self-abuse in the Bible. On the whole, it was not taken very seriously until in the nineteenth century it was brought into prominence especially by the French philosopher, C. J. Tissot. Accord-

ing to him, masturbation is a very serious weakness, leading to various forms of illness and insanity. Tissot was the sponsor of all the lurid literature which appeared on this subject on both sides of the Atlantic. His view is now discredited by medical science. The pendulum has swung in the other direction. Even religious writers such as Leslie D. Weatherhead, for example, are inclined to deal rather leniently with this matter.<sup>8</sup>

Parents observing the practice in children should not be unduly alarmed. Above all, they should not resort to threats and physical punishment. Very frequently it is a passing event in the life of a child just as sucking of the thumb. Young people should realize that it reflects a kind of emotional immaturity and of introversion which may retard the development of true adult reactions to stimuli outside of the self.

The treatment is essentially mental. The person is to be shown what he is doing both in the physical and psychological aspects. However, the observance of some simple rules of physical health may supplement the psychological approach: avoid stimulants, like alcohol, which weaken moral resistance, engage in a sport which, while building the body, produces healthy fatigue, and the like. Creative activity is a good sublimation of the sex instinct.

From the religious point of view, while all sin is mortal in the sense that it separates us from God, not

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. *The Mastery of Sex* (3rd ed., 1932), pp. 124 ff.

every sin has the same devastating effect on the sinner and his environment. In some cases, self-abuse may be an escape from a greater evil. Nevertheless it remains an evil. As always, our final refuge is the forgiving and cleansing power of God.

### *Sexual perversion*

As Scripture and experience show, moral perversion follows on the heels of religious perversion. According to Romans 1:18, God is an unavoidable God. If man scorns the love of God he will find himself under the wrath of God, as may be seen from the moral perversion in which the natural man is held.

The Mosaic Law provided the death penalty for both homosexuality and contact with an animal. In the light of the gospel, however, we know that the grace of God is always greater than his anger and that he is ready to forgive if a man turns from his evil ways. From the biological point of view, moreover, it is necessary to distinguish between temporary and innate abnormal tendencies (neither of which, of course, is without sin). In pastoral work therefore, discretion, discernment, and wise counseling are of the greatest importance. In addition, an abnormal person may also be useful if he dedicates his life to God. Though he may not be able to feel a natural affection (*Eros*) for the opposite sex, which is essential for marriage, he may still share in Christian love (*Agape*), which is essential for leading people to



Christ. The state, on the other hand, has no moral right to prosecute these people indiscriminately for it exists not to punish sin but rather crime. The sadist and masochist, however, are always a threat to society and should be kept under the protective custody of the state. But they should be treated in accordance with the best insights of both medicine and psychology.

### *Prostitution*

Prostitution is defined "as promiscuous unchastity for gain." It is an evil not peculiar to any age or country. In many instances it forms a part of pagan religions. In the Bible the orgies of the ancient Canaanites are a special target of prophetic criticism. In ancient Greece prostitution was a matter of national pride and glory, so much so that even in the church at Corinth it was regarded as compatible with Christian ethics. Public prostitution became a widespread practice in medieval Europe. Brothels were frequently licensed by the higher clergy. Princes and emperors were entertained in such houses. The Council at Constance was attended by one thousand such women. The Reformation tried hard to abolish the system. In the eyes of Luther, a government which licenses a brothel does not deserve to be called a Christian government.<sup>9</sup> But later brothels were re-established in Protestant countries.

Among the causes of prostitution are poverty, abnormal

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<sup>9</sup> E.A. LXI, 255 f.



desire for sexual indulgence, and seduction. The sense of disgrace which a girl is often made to feel if she has, or is going to have, an illegitimate child may easily drive her into this sordid business. On the part of the male partner, alcohol and the breakdown of moral resistance under the impact of mass psychology, as in the armed forces, bear a large responsibility.

Since the early Middle Ages, the Christian West has tried to regulate prostitution. These regulations include licensing of brothels, registration of the women, and compulsory medical examination. But neither system is satisfactory, each one having its peculiar defects. The best is to be reached through personal religious and ethical work. The double standard of morality must be abandoned. The man is often the greater sinner. He must be taught to realize that no physical union can be indulged without harm to his personality unless under conditions of true and lasting love.

From the beginning of the church, abstinence from prostitution was regarded as indispensable to church membership. "The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord." As a member of Christ, it cannot be made the member of a prostitute. By faith in Christ, man receives not only the forgiveness of sin, but also power to release him from the enslavement of sin.

### *Sex education*

In matters of sex, a conspiracy of silence on the part

of responsible people has done great harm in the past. The very mentioning of such matters was simply regarded as taboo. This attitude created a dangerous situation; as it left a child or young person either in absolute ignorance or induced him to seek information from undesirable sources.

The primary responsibility rests with the parents. The best time to impart knowledge is the time when the child asks a question. If he does not ask, a question may be elicited in a casual way. The answer too should be in a natural tone, the extent of information depending on the age of the child. When the child has reached the age of puberty it is best if the father will speak to his son, and the mother to her daughter. At that age a boy or girl should know the basic facts about the sex organs of his own body. He should also learn to use the proper terms for the sex organs and understand in principle the origin of human life. Some knowledge about venereal diseases may also be in order. To enlarge his knowledge he may be handed a suitable book of which there is no dearth today. Let no parent think that a child is embarrassed when it asks questions. He will receive this information in the same way he receives other instructions from a person whom he loves and admires. The best preparation for a proper control of the sex impulse is to train a child so that he sees it as an integral part of life as a whole.

The efforts of the parents ought to be supplemented by the work of the pastor who through religious classes,

confirmation school, and young peoples' groups is afforded an opportunity to give additional information and spiritual directives. From experience we suggest the separation of boys and girls and the engaging of a competent married woman of the church to speak to the girls. The co-operation of a doctor who has a genuine Christian outlook will be of great help. It does not seem wise that our elementary or secondary schools should impart sex information. Here the classes are by far too large. A spiritual homogeneity is lacking among the pupils, and many teachers do not have a Christian understanding. In college the situation is different because the student is already acquainted with the basic facts and is emotionally and intellectually more mature.

## The Finer Things

We are called by God to appropriate and rule the world with our intellect. This ability is included in the biblical view of man as created in the image of God.

The attempt at realizing this aim works itself out in two different ways: (1) in technical mastery over nature (civilization), and (2) in the spiritual penetration of reality (culture). While reserving our discussion of civilization for the next chapter we shall make at this point a few remarks on the cultural life of man as manifest in education, art, literature, the press, radio, and television.

### *Education*

Limiting our discussion to the American scene, we find that the separation of church and state has a strong bearing on the education of our youth.

In the past, education has been one-sidedly rationalistic. The schools were believed to exist solely for the impartation of knowledge. But man is more than reason; he is a unit of body and soul, of intellect, will, and feeling.

The church, therefore, has good reasons to welcome the shift of emphasis in modern education. On the other hand, the trend toward secularization is a matter of grave concern to the church. Broadly speaking, the essential characteristics of the secular philosophy of education in America are as follows: faith in the natural goodness of man, the idea of progress, the relativity of truth and a consequent pragmatism, shifting standards of morality, and a shallow empiricism. Over against these tendencies the educational philosophy of the church must have its root in the basic truths of Reformation theology, i.e. in the *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and *sola Scriptura* (by grace alone, by faith alone, and the Scriptures alone) of historic Protestantism.

The *sola gratia* implies the sinfulness of man and the absolute need for the redeeming work of Christ. It gives our educational philosophy a *Weltanschauung* which not only explains the social, economic, racial, and international tension, but also prepares the youth for a life of sacrificial service by pointing to a way out of the world's problems which is feasible when a sufficiently large group of men and women live in the light of the gospel.

The *sola fide* makes life an intimate personal relation with God through Christ, emphasizing both the responsibility and dignity of the individual in a world dominated by mass movements.

The *sola Scriptura* provides the church with an answer to the vexing problem of authority. Of course, this is not

to be understood in the sense of American fundamentalism which does not distinguish between divine revelation and its historical setting in an ancient culture. It is rather to be applied in the original way of Luther: Scripture, bearing witness to God in Christ, is the deposit of revelation according to which God is both the ultimate ground (Creator) and the ultimate goal (Redeemer) of the world. In this sense the Scriptures are final authority in the classroom of the philosopher as well as in the laboratory of the scientist.

Concerning the means of education, the church in our country has been engaged for a long time in: (1) religious instruction through the Christian congregation, (2) comprehensive education through the parochial school system, and (3) in higher education through church-related colleges and seminaries. In view of the ever-increasing influence of the secular mind in education, the latter two seem best to safeguard the Christian education of the church's youth. A church college, however, does not properly discharge its functions when it simply includes in its curriculum "religion" as a required subject, relegating the Christian aspect of education to a merely marginal stress. To be a Christian college means that all subjects are being taught in relation to Christ, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."<sup>1</sup> For this reason the church schools have no monopoly on Christian education. Christ may at times be taken more seriously

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<sup>1</sup> Col. 2:3.



in the classroom of a tax-supported school than may be the case in a church college. Besides, no church school is immune "against the wiles of the devil."<sup>2</sup> In order to fulfil its mission to the whole world it should be the concern of the church to send competent men and women as teachers into all the schools of our country, bearing witness to the gospel both by their conduct and their interpretation of facts given in history, philosophy, and the natural sciences.

### *The fine arts*

The appreciation of beauty is innate in man, reflecting the perfection of divine nature. Christians are grateful that, being reconciled to God through Christ, created nature may speak to them of the beauty of him who made heaven and earth. Esthetics, therefore, has a rightful place in Christian ethics. On the other hand, esthetics may become a serious impediment to useful living. Lost in the contemplation of beauty, man may become incapable of action and unwilling to face the ugly side of life as revealed in the sickroom, insane asylum, and so on. The cult of beauty may even become a substitute for religion. This danger is real, however, only when man has lost sight of the living God. If life seems to be a tragedy, the esthetically minded unbeliever may conceive of it as a piece of tragic art or he may try, by means of

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<sup>2</sup> Eph. 6:11.

humor, to cast an esthetic veil over the gruesomeness of life.

Among the fine arts, literature has always held a high place. What we are concerned about here is the Christian character of the literature that is studied and read among us. On the negative side we must say that merely treating a Christian or religious topic does not grant Christian character to a drama or novel. Rather the Christian position is maintained when a piece of literature speaks the truth about life in the spirit of reverence for life, as created by God. The realist or naturalist in literature may be closer to God than the exponent of a shallow idealism, and the great literature of antiquity will always maintain a rightful place in Christian civilization. Neither is the treatment of sex problems in modern literature of necessity unethical and harmful. If done in the spirit of reverence for him who at the beginning endowed man with the gift of procreation, no sound objections can be raised against it in the name of the Christian faith.

The same applies to the other arts such as painting and sculpture. Their Christian character is conditioned not by the object which they represent but by the spirit which they reflect. Likewise, the presentation of the nude is not necessarily immoral because the body created by God is not immoral. A nude statue, for example, discloses the secret of the body without the accompaniment of sensual passion. Ethically it may be less dangerous than a figure dressed in clothing that is more suggestive

than protective. It is highly significant that the New Testament contains no protest against the many nude statues that were to be seen everywhere in the Greek cities of that age.

Finally, the same principle holds true with respect to music. The essential appeal of music is emotional. Music is Christian when it reflects reverence for the divinely ordered moral nature of man. Contrariwise, it is cheap when it serves as a stimulus to the sensual and frivolous instincts in man. With respect to the use of music in public worship, like other church arts, a composition played on the organ must be related to, inspired and sanctified by the Word.

### *The press*

The press and literature are closely related. By means of the printed word both transcend the limits of space and time which are a severe handicap to the influence of the spoken word. On the other hand, the spoken word has greater weight because it is more personal and flexible. For this reason a letter is only a poor substitute for an intimate conversation. Of the two types of the printed word, the press wants to serve an immediate need, its value is ephemeral, while the literature of a country has an abiding value.

The press renders us a real service. It is the most effective means of information. It also exercises a supervision of public life which makes the misbehavior of an indi-

vidual, especially that of a public figure, extremely hazardous. The freedom of the press is very essential to the healthy life of a nation. Consequently, the first action of a tyrannical government is usually the suspension of freedom of speech and the printed word. The church, therefore, must take its stand unequivocally on the side of a free press because a wholesome life can thrive only in an atmosphere of freedom.

The danger of the press, on the other hand, is that it is too often dominated by political parties or economic blocs. Instead of serving the cause of truth and harmony, it thwarts the former while creating animosity and contention in community and national life. Moreover, because it wants to disseminate all the news quickly the press is insufficiently informed, presenting a distorted picture of what has happened. But whenever the truth is twisted, freedom is seriously in danger and justice is violated. In addition, much of the news deals with crime and human perversion. Whenever the floodlight is turned on the dark side of life, most likely evil is not overcome but rather confirmed in its destructive ways. The reader's imagination is stirred up and his sense of shame is weakened. To remedy these factors, the church is not asked to attempt control of the press. Even if possible, this would be no guarantee that the truth would always be presented in a spirit of love, because as an organization the church too is a part of the world. Rather, the church is called to

exercise through the gospel a cleansing influence over the minds of both editors and subscribers.

In addition to the daily papers a vast number of periodicals claim the attention of the reading public. They serve a great variety of purposes. Their literary or scientific quality too is varied and diffused. Of these the periodicals published by the church deserve the special attention of Christian people. These publications supplement the message of the pulpit. They also provide us with news about the progress and conflicts of the gospel in the world, doing in a modern way what Paul did to the church in Antioch. In the third place, they try to interpret events of national and international importance in the light of the Christian faith. For these reasons a Christian home should not be without a church paper.

Another type of printed matter that finds its way into every American home is the comic book or comic strip. They exercise a strong influence especially on the minds of children.

As to their literary form, many of them could be classified as satires. The ancient Romans made effective use of this kind of literary composition in attacking the follies and frenzies of a degenerate society and the brutalities and crimes of political tyranny.

Some of our comics are a kind of modernized form of the beast fables (moralizing animal stories) of antiquity. Luther, for example, was very fond of the fables of Aesop. As a pastime while detained at Coburg at the time of the

Diet of Augsburg, he translated some of these stories into German because, as he said, next to Scripture, there are not many books which contain in simple language so many wise teachings, warnings, and instructions.

Obviously comic books must be used with discernment and discrimination. Some of them revel in crime and sex. But in this respect they are not different from many modern novels. Because of their pictorial character however, they are more suggestive than a narrative without illustrations. For some children they also may have a tendency to arrest interest in the great literature of past and present authors.

### *Radio and television*

What the invention of the printing press did to the cultural pattern of the Middle Ages the invention of the radio has done for our own times. It has revolutionized the means of information and communication.

This cultural revolution is accentuated still more by the invention of television. Modern man is able to be an ear and eye witness of any significant contemporary event.

Like the printed word, radio and television can be used either in the service of God or in the service of evil. The fact that they establish a more immediate connection between the speaker or performer and his audience than the printed word and that by means of them an individual may gather around himself a world-wide audience in-



creases immensely their effectiveness for the promotion of either good or evil.

It goes without saying that both radio and television exercise a strong influence on the home life of the American people. Some men regard them with suspicion. In their eyes they are like hostile intruders. Others look upon them as friendly visitors in the home. Undoubtedly there is something to be said for either view. But on the whole, the advantages greatly outnumber the disadvantages. First of all, a family is entirely free not to tune in at a time that should belong exclusively to family conversation and fellowship, and it is the solemn obligation of every Christian family that this rule be observed. On the other hand, both radio and television may keep parents and children together at home in a way no one ever dared hope for before. The complaint of the movie industry about a serious decrease of revenue seems to bear out this observation.

Will these modern devices of entertainment in the home make us a generation of passive spectators, leaving the expression of our artistic abilities undeveloped? This is the complaint of some educators. The danger may be real, we admit. Such entertainment as reading light literature or too frequently attending the movies, for example, may result in a kind of mental impotence in which an individual, especially a child or adolescent, is unable to carry any activity to a productive conclusion. But on the other hand, these modern means of entertainment may also act as

a stimulus to the child. As is well known, the interest of the average American in sport performed by professional or school athletes has in no way minimized our children's eagerness to become active participants in football, baseball, and the like. In fact, it has made them more sport conscious.

Realizing the significance of both radio and television for our national life, it should be the concern of everyone that the programs will reflect a due respect for the Christian understanding of man. They must not fall into the hands of unscrupulous men seeking political and economic power. Of course, we shall be grateful for time allowed for religious broadcasts. The daily morning devotions and the broadcasts of our Sunday services carry the message of the church into many a home where the Scriptures are never read or a Christian hymn is never heard otherwise. Moreover, they render a special service to the sick and aged who cannot attend a church service of their own. Yet these distinctly religious programs are not enough to warrant the conclusion that the radio has a Christian approach to life. In order to do that, we must strive to see that the principles of justice, truth, and love are maintained.

### *Censorship*

In the preceding paragraphs we have referred to the danger implied in the freedom of the press, radio, and television. The sinful mind of man may seize upon them as a means of perverting the moral life of the people. This

possibility raises the question of the moral right of public censorship.

The Roman Catholic church deals with this problem in a way characteristic of its genius. According to Roman Catholic doctrine, the church is a spiritual society where authority which is the unitive principle of every full-formed society is invested in the pope. Since authority has for its object those means which are necessary to the existence and well-being of the whole organism, the pope, either directly or indirectly, exercises a kind of "motherly tyranny of love" for the protection of his children from poison in faith and morals.

Roman Catholic publications, therefore, must bear the *nihil obstat* (nothing is in the way) and *imprimatur* (let it be printed) of the hierarchy. Publications which in a special way are considered to be contrary to Catholic faith and morals are put on the *Index of Prohibited Books*, first established by Pope Paul IV, 1559. Permission to read prohibited books may be obtained by special license. Among the categories of prohibited books are non-Catholic editions of the Bible, books defending heresies, and books describing or defending obscene matters.

But in the eyes of Paul Blanshard, the *Index* is the least important part of Roman Catholic censorship. For good reasons he holds that a world-wide system of local censorship and boycott is actually much more effective. This system includes every means of public information and education. As may be expected, wherever possible,

the hierarchy engages the civil authorities in putting teeth into this sort of "motherly tyranny."<sup>3</sup>

Naturally the Protestant churches cannot follow this method of the Church of Rome. The very nature of Protestantism is averse to it. According to Protestant doctrine, the church does not consist of two different orders, one that rules and the other that obeys. Scripture calls upon every Christian "to prove all things and to hold fast that which is good."<sup>4</sup> This does not mean that the Protestant clergy should be less concerned with the problem under discussion. Yet they must exercise their influence in an entirely different way. Instead of dictating to the people, the ministry must offer information and guidance. For that reason reviews of current books and of current films in our church periodicals are of real importance. They can render a great service to the spiritual and moral life of the church and of the nation. The best protection against obscene literature, however, is the cultivation of a spiritual mind. Parents likewise ought to remember this when dealing with children. A mere prohibition will not work because it is purely negative. The vacuum in the mind of a child must be filled with "whatsoever things are true, honest, just and pure."

To be sure, this does not answer the question whether Protestantism should also lean upon the state for enforcing public morality. Lutheranism and Calvinism do not see

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Paul Blanshard, *American Freedom and Catholic Power* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1951).

<sup>4</sup> I Thess. 5:21.

eye to eye on this problem. Calvin held that the promotion of piety is the first object of civil government. The churches under the influence of Calvin, therefore, are inclined at times to use the civil authorities for the promotion of public piety and morality as freely as Roman Catholics may do. This approach of Calvin reflects his inability to distinguish properly between law and gospel, church and state.

The state, Luther holds, exists for the cause of civil righteousness but not for the promotion of the gospel. Hence we cannot enlist the state in the promotion of Christian piety. However, this viewpoint of Luther does not leave the state unconcerned with the question of ethics. Rather on its own account the state should carefully guard and protect those realms of human existence which are basic to the well-being of man. Nor can a state for any length of time ignore God as the source of all human good. A communistic state may be atheistic, but it is not without religion, i.e. an appeal to a reality or value transcending individual existence. Yet since the state is apt to fail, the church must act as its conscience. For this reason Luther maintained that the law belongs both to the hall of justice and to the pulpit.

## Economics for Christians

Economics is the science of the production, distribution, and consumption of material goods. "It is concerned with the activities of man in the process of earning a living and of applying his income to the satisfaction of his wants."<sup>1</sup> Grounded in the will of God and necessitated by the physical needs of man, it has the dignity of a divine order. This fact is confirmed by the teaching of Jesus whose parables of the kingdom are based to a large extent on a close observation of economic life.

Dealing primarily with material goods, it might seem that the science of economics is outside of the field of ethics. But this view is only apparent, not real, for the material goods are produced by men and for men. Human life enters in as the determining factor of any economic system. We cannot be indifferent to such questions as whether the goods are produced by slave labor or free labor and whether they are produced in sufficient quantity

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<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana*, IX, 556.



for the needs of all and at a price within reach of the people.

The two great systems of economics vying with each other in our days are capitalism, on the one hand, and socialism and communism on the other.

### *Capitalism*

Loosely used, the word "capital" means any kind of wealth possessed by a person. If so understood, capitalism as an economic system involving the exploitation of private wealth for personal needs and enjoyment has long existed in human history. But when we speak of capitalism today we usually mean something quite different. In the modern sense, "capital" means man-made or nature-made wealth productively used for profit. The word actually refers to goods that are used in the productive process. "Capitalism," therefore, refers to a particular economic system of ownership and operation of these productive goods. It is one particular system of economic organization.

Modern capitalism has its root in the Industrial Revolution, whose impact was first felt in Great Britain, and in the French Revolution in the eighteenth century. At its basis lie the maxims of economic liberalism: *laissez-faire*, (let things alone) and the political liberalism: "That government governs best which governs least." Hence the capitalistic system is built on the principles of private property and individual initiative, competition and the profit motive, the civil freedom of the labor class, and a

free market. Until the wisdom of these principles was seriously challenged by the great depression of the thirties, this economic system was regarded by most people as essential to "the American way of life." Undoubtedly, the system has made a splendid contribution to the development of America and to the Western world as a whole. It has provided more people with a higher standard of living than any other system has ever done before. It has made it possible for the American worker to have as his common possession many things which in other parts of the world are accessible only to a small upper class. Likewise in western, central, and northern Europe, capitalism has undoubtedly raised the standard of living for all classes of the people.

But along with many undoubted merits, there have also been many serious evils associated with this system. As may be expected from the Christian understanding of man, economic individualism breeds economic egoism. Strange as it may seem, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels had a finer appreciation of this fact in their day than many contemporary Christians. Said they in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, "It (capitalism) has left no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment.' . . . It has resolved personal worth into exchange value."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the degradation of the laborer to a mere tool of production, the loss of the divine

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted from an English translation published by Charles H. Kerr & Company (Chicago, 1947), p. 15.

dignity of the call, the gross inequality in the distribution of wealth, the ruthless exploitation of the wage earner, excessive competition, and the recurrent cycles of production and employment and overproduction and unemployment are among the worst failures of the system.

### *Socialism and communism*

To bring deliverance from the evils of capitalism is the aim of socialism. The outstanding features of the socialist program are: abolition of private ownership of the means of production and the transfer of them to the collective ownership of society, the state or the trade unions (syndicalism); in the place of a free economy, a planned economy; and in the place of a profit economy, an economy geared to the needs of men. According to the *Proceedings of the National Convention of the Socialist Party*, April 6-8, 1940, Washington, D.C., the aims of the American Socialists were stated as follows: "Socialization is social ownership and democratic control of industry, substituting the principle of public service or social usefulness for the principle of private profit, preserving workers' free choice of occupation, consumers' free choice of consumption, and freedom of association for all functional groups." At heart, therefore, socialism is economic. The central issues are those of the social ownership and management of the means of production. But when the definition and its implications are more carefully examined, there are around this central core a number of political and social issues.

Like their capitalist opponents, the American socialists are believers in a liberal democracy involving the social and religious freedom of the individual. This sentiment is fully shared by the British Labor Party and the Social Democrats of the European continent.

In contrast to socialism, communism is aiming at the abolition of private property in general. Communism holds that the title to both producers' goods and consumers' goods is to be vested in society. In applying these principles to the exigencies of life, communism makes the following distinctions: First, the ownership of consumers' goods whose use is intimately connected with the person of the consumer, society may transfer to individuals or families, but the amount and kind of such goods is awarded in accordance with individual's needs. To this category of consumers' goods belong essentially food and clothing. Second, the ownership of consumers' goods whose use is not intimately connected with the person of the consumer shall remain in the possession of society, but the "current services" of these goods may be made available to individuals or social groups. To this latter category belong such goods as houses, churches, theaters, museums, concert halls, and so on. These principles show sufficiently that communism must of necessity be opposed to our Western democracy. It is by nature authoritarian and totalitarian, for it regards organized society (the state) as the only arbiter of the needs of the individual man. The socialist program, on the other hand, leaves room for individual

initiative. In a socialized state the economic motivation of the individual is not materially different from that of capitalism. Under both systems the individual must work in order to live. But communism relies much more on a noneconomic motivation. Ideally speaking, it expects a person whose needs are fully supplied by society to work according to his ability for the greater good of society.

Both socialism and communism have their root in the social philosophy of Karl Marx. Born of Jewish parents in southwestern Germany in 1818, Marx died as a political refugee in London, 1883. To Marx, the state was a means of oppression. For the labor class he expected nothing from the existing order but a gradual decline of the already miserable standard of living. Thus he became the revolutionary par excellence. The moderates among his followers, i.e. the socialists as described above, rejected some of these radical principles. They became the sponsors of the trade unions. They mean to improve gradually the wages and working conditions of the labor class through social legislation and bargaining and, if necessary, through strikes. They are democratic and patriotic but antimilitaristic. The radicals who consider themselves to be the genuine followers of Marx—the communists—have no fatherland except the *Internationale* or, recently, the Soviet Union. They decline in principle every sort of co-operation with the capitalistic order. They have frequently obstructed the social legislation of a capitalistic state as a half-hearted measure. The greater the misery of



the proletariat the easier will be the overthrow of the existing order, they think.

### *The voice of the church*

To our shame we must confess that the church was rather slow to speak to the economic situation created by the Industrial Revolution. In Europe the churches were closely allied with the state. In America they drew their membership largely from those classes of society that benefited by the enormous economic expansion of the country. In addition, the unwholesome division of man into an immortal soul, to be saved for the sky, and a perishable body which was regarded as lying outside of the redemptive activity of the Holy Spirit, had a dulling effect upon the social consciousness of the churches. On the whole, the liberals were more quickly moved to action than the conservatives.

In the early years of the present century the protest of the former crystallized into the social gospel movement under the recognized leadership of Walter Rauschenbusch. To him and his followers the social gospel became, "God's predestined agent to continue what the Reformation began."<sup>3</sup> They flatly identified the kingdom of God with a co-operative society in which competition and acquisitiveness would be outlawed. With the zeal of a prophet Rauschenbusch tried to rebuild American society

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<sup>3</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1918), p. 177.



on an altruistic basis. But the social gospel is not the gospel of the New Testament. Like capitalism which it tries to replace, and socialism which it aims to Christianize, it has its origin in an optimistic rationalism. Actually the church cannot in the name of the Christian faith take sides in the conflict between capitalism and socialism. On the basis of the gospel either system of economic life is possible while neither approach to life is absolute. Hence Christianity must identify itself neither with capitalism nor with socialism. There can be no Christian economic program. But there are a number of leading factors which the church must stress and proclaim.

First of all, we must rediscover the biblical truth that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." True, he has given the earth to men to dwell in it. But the rapacity of modern economic life is a crime against the Creator. If we want to overcome the demonic in our civilization we must recapture the true reverence for life,<sup>4</sup> a reverence that will look upon a tree not in terms of potential pulp and paper for the evening paper, but rather as a living organism, reflecting the life and beauty of God. Because it is the creation of God there is something holy about nature. The face of our economic system will only be renewed insofar as we succeed in renewing our spiritual existence.

It is evident that human life depends on the production

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<sup>4</sup> Reverence for life is not to be understood here in the mystic sense of Albert Schweitzer.

and consumption of economic goods. Without this process life would perish from the earth. Hence a decision made in economics may easily bring weal or woe to millions of human beings. The great hope of the church lies indeed beyond the confines of history. It is the consummation of the kingdom. Yet the little hopes of the Fourth Petition: food, raiment, money, goods, house, and lands, are also legitimate hopes of the Christian and are sanctified by the creative and providential activity of God.

When we inquire in the New Testament we find the first Christians were not indifferent to matters of economic life. Paul, for example, supported himself by the trade which he had learned in youth, and expected the churches to follow his example. He instructed the Thessalonians by word and letter "that if any would not work, neither should he eat." To him life spent in idleness was disorderly conduct. Hence the first injunction implied in the economic view of the Apostle is that each one should work for his own support. This of course presupposes that wages are in keeping with prices. Therefore the second injunction reads, "The laborer deserves his wages." This statement makes the employer responsible for the well-being of his employee. Paul extends this responsibility on the part of the employer even to the slaves. To hold back by fraud the wages of the laborers, James calls a sin that cries out and will find in the Lord an avenger.

In the Old Testament, wealth is frequently regarded as a divine reward for godliness. The New Testament is

more reticent in this matter. It is primarily concerned with the danger involved in the possession of riches. In the last analysis, man is but a steward of the economic goods God has entrusted to him; hence he is responsible for their management and use both to God and his fellow-men.

The Christian ethic, therefore, transcends both capitalism and socialism.

The capitalist emphasis on the sacredness of private property should be taken with a grain of salt. True, man cannot be deprived entirely of the right to hold personal property without injury to the full development of his personality. An economic order which consistently denies the right of private property lowers man to the level of a subhuman existence. An animal has no property, but man cannot be without it. Hence the communist system becomes guilty of an error.

On the other hand, the idea of private property can never be absolute. Even in a capitalist society, the state has always reserved for itself the right to expropriate a man's property if the common good makes it desirable. Of course, under the capitalistic system such a man may look for an appropriate monetary remuneration. From the biblical point of view, man is only a steward administering the goods of the Creator. Hence his rights are limited by the claims of God on him. Some Christian thinkers have maintained that the Seventh Commandment endorses the rights of private property. This argument is not quite convincing. The Seventh Commandment could also be

applied to a socialized order: Thou shalt not steal what belongs to the community. Actually, consistent socialists have said that private property is theft.<sup>5</sup>

Over against excessive individualism, the church must also point to the fact that all human life is interdependent. The capitalist is not as independent as he may think. In his "pursuit of happiness" he depends on the inventor, the director, the engineer, the clerk, and numerous skilled and unskilled workers. He is by no means the sole master of the field. For this reason he needs the good will, indeed, the active interest of his employees in his plant. The broken personal relation between the employer and employee must be restored. The preferred position which rich people hold in society is definitely unchristian. Neither has the educated person an exclusive claim on the respect and honor of the community. The garbage collector, for example, also fulfils an essential work for the whole. We must rediscover the meaning of the "call," that all useful work is sanctified by God.

Remembering that in many countries now under communist rule the organized churches remained indifferent to the economic plight of the masses, we must not assume a holier-than-thou attitude toward the people behind the iron curtain. The economy of these countries was predominantly agrarian and the social issue was between the great

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<sup>5</sup> Historically speaking, we admit that it would be difficult to interpret the Tenth Commandment collectively, for the idea that a woman could be owned collectively is entirely strange to the law. In fact, it is regarded as sinful.

landowners and the peasants. In many countries the organized churches were among the greatest holders of land. For this reason, a war against those countries would never be a "holy war" (quite apart from the fact that no war is "holy"). As citizens we shall defend our country in case it is attacked by the communist world; but we shall enter upon such a venture in the spirit of humility and repentance. The church of Christ is not without blame for the rise of communism in the world.

The problem of taking interest deserves a brief comment. It is an inherent principle of a capitalist economy. However, on the basis of a word of Jesus related in Luke 6:34-35, some Christian ethicists have considered this practice unethical. Actually Jesus is not speaking about the taking of interest in the technical sense, but rather of the returning of what has been borrowed. In addition, this saying occurs in the context of the Sermon on the Mount. Hence a church that does not accept the other sayings in a literalistic and legalistic manner, should not single out this one for such a purpose. The medieval church condemned the taking of interest at some of its general councils. Luther too voiced some misgivings in this matter. What he finds objectionable is the exploitation of the need of another person. He is not thinking of productive interest. Calvin, to be sure, was more "capitalistic" in this matter than Luther. But that which was of greater importance in the agrarian society of the day was the rent for land and tithes paid from the product of the soil. It is a well-known fact



that the peasants demanded the abolition of these contributions. Yet the Roman Catholic church as well as Luther and Zwingli realized how impossible it was. It would have spelled disaster for the whole economic system of the day.

In the nineteenth century, the problem under discussion threatened to add more fuel to the doctrinal controversies of the Lutheran bodies in America. Walther, the father of the Missouri Synod, maintained in the late sixties that the taking of interest in any form was to be regarded as usury and as contrary to the clear teachings of the Scriptures. Meeting with sharp opposition in his own church body, however, he dropped the issue. The *Concordia Cyclopaedia*, published at St. Louis, states, "The entire matter clearly belongs into the category of the commandment of love and must be regulated by circumstances."

Emil Brunner offers the criticism that due to this institution it is possible to lead a parasitical existence. That of course cannot be denied. Yet he goes farther saying that this principle remains suspect because a man may today live on work done in the past. If this criticism is valid then the whole system of drawing sickness benefits and old-age pensions is unethical and wrong.<sup>6</sup>

We cannot truthfully say that an individualistic economy is Christian and that a collective economy is unchristian. Some remarks in the Gospels indicate that Jesus and

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<sup>6</sup> *The Divine Imperative*, p. 434.



his disciples met their needs from a common treasury. The mother church in Jerusalem followed this example of our Lord but evidently it did not work. Collectivism does not eliminate the greed and envy of man. A few years after the first Pentecost, Mary, the mother of John Mark, is referred to as owning a house in Jerusalem. The whole arrangement was evidently unproductive because no provision had been made for labor. Yet no man, not even a Christian, can change the divine order that man must work in order to eat.

The collective or communistic order was also highly esteemed by some of the early fathers. It became the economic basis of monastic life. But here productive labor was included in the monastic rules. The individual was to pledge poverty, but not the group. The same is true with respect to some circles in Protestantism as, for example, the Amana Society; the House of David; the Ephrata Community near Reading, Pa., dissolved in 1814; and the Zoar Separatists in Ohio, dissolved in 1898.

Unfortunately, modern communism is far removed from the spiritual basis of the Christian faith. Its view of life is definitely atheistic. According to Marx, "Man is free if he owes his existence to himself." Religion, therefore, is the beginning of "unfreedom," for in religion man recognizes a power not his own. Hence the worker, in the eyes of Marx, can regain his freedom only if he throws off his double dependence — in economics, by overcoming the division of capital and labor, and in the realm of meta-

physics, by a denial of God. Only atheism can make man free. Consequently, the abolition of capitalism and the destruction of religion, are, in the teaching of Marx, intrinsically interlocked.

In the church, collectivism has always been a matter of choice. In the communistic world it was established and is being maintained by brute force. This turn of events was inevitable. Just as the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevski's famous novel does not believe in freedom for man because he actually does not believe in God, so communism must deny freedom to man because it rejects the spiritual foundation on which alone community life can thrive in freedom.

Another tragic result of its atheism is the fact that communism knows nothing of the social power of forgiveness. Sin, or in legal language, crime, is a disruptive force. It destroys the relationship between man and man. Even a small thing like gossip may make life a curse between relatives or neighbors. But forgiveness repairs the damage because both the offender and offended need the forgiveness of God. The Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer is loaded with social energies. The Christian faith forgives its enemies and tries to redeem them. Communism liquidates them.

On the other hand, evangelical Christianity must take more seriously the revolutionary implication of the gospel. In many instances the historical status quo resembles more

closely "the futile ways inherited from our fathers" <sup>7</sup> than the original Garden planted by God. There must be room in the church for new ventures. For a long time the churches frowned on the labor unions. With the exception of some fundamentalists, this has changed now.

True, the modern unions have their origin in Marxian philosophy. Yet God can use not only a pious man like Amos, but also an atheist to promote the cause of justice. Likewise strikes have frequently been condemned as unchristian. Actually they are the only effective means which the workmen have to make an impression on an indifferent or hostile capitalist, for labor is the only goods which the workers have to sell. Besides, it would be utterly unfair to deny the worker the right of bargaining which is otherwise accepted as an essential principle of capitalism.

In addition, the church should give serious consideration to the idea of "economic democracy" which gives the workingmen a voice in the management of industry and to the co-operative movement which, since its inception in Rochdale, Great Britain, 1844, has attained world-wide importance. However, evangelical Christianity must be on its guard not to identify these movements with "the law of Christ." Like private enterprise, they are orders of this world. They are subject to the same moral limitations. People may join or use them as means to promote their own selfish ends.

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<sup>7</sup> I Pet. 1:18.

The decisive help must be the church itself, for it is only a "Christian" church when in its own life it overrides all social distinctions, taking seriously the apostolic teaching that all believers are members of one body which is Christ. Then it can bring together socially those who are separated by reason of wealth and education. One of the most effective means of realizing this fellowship is the Lord's Supper. Here people who in ordinary life never sit around one table actually eat of one bread and drink of one cup. In this manner the primitive church solved, in its own midst, the problem of slavery long before this vicious institution was abolished legally.<sup>8</sup> In addition, through its ministry of love, the church will go about as the good Samaritan dressing the wounds of those who have fallen among the "thieves" of the prevailing economic system, for we must remain free from the illusion of being able ever to "solve" the social problem. Until the end of history we shall have with us "the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind." The indispensable means by which every modern economic system maintains its efficiency causes at the same time the destruction of human lives. The number of victims of the "New Moloch" is appalling. In brief, our philosophy of economics is Christian only if we are able to relate effectively the redeeming act of God in Christ to the whole realm of human existence.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Paul's Letter to Philemon; also Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11.

## Politics for Christians

Christians are citizens of two realms. By nature we are a part of the country in which we live, while by grace we are members of the fellowship of the saints. Our natural life is conditioned by the state under whose jurisdiction we find ourselves by choice or circumstance, and whose social and economic life we share. By his work as Creator, God has placed us in the realm of nature, whereas in the church we have part in his grace manifest in Christ Jesus. Both kingdoms have their origin in God; neither one is autonomous. The state, like the church, is subject to the will of God, and the statesman, like the churchman, is responsible to his command. It was a serious mistake when some German theologians, since Hegel and Bismarck, interpreted Luther's teaching of the "two kingdoms" as implying that in Luther's eyes the state is autonomous. Luther's view of the state is anticlerical but not amoral.

### *Definition*

The state is the political organization of society, dis-

tinguished from all other social agencies by the exercise of sovereignty. The essence of the state is not right but might.<sup>1</sup> A despotic state is still a state while a state with no power is in the process of disintegration; it is anarchy. But it must be borne in mind that, from the standpoint of ethics, the sovereignty of the state is not unlimited. It is circumscribed by the will of God, the Sovereign of the universe. In conformity with his will, the state should recognize the needs and the welfare of man. Consequently, in Christian society we have a right to expect that the state should exercise its power according to the principles of justice and even love.

### *Origin*

We are not concerned with the different arguments or political theories as to how the various states came into existence (patriarchial, kinship, social contract theory, power concept, etc.). Viewed from the angle of Christian ethics, it is sufficient to insist that the state has its origin in the creative will of God. He who created man as a social being also willed the state as the political form of aggregate social life. Luther conceived of the state as rooted not in the original order of creation but rather in the order of preservation. It was necessitated by man's sin. It is "the kingdom of sin" or "the kingdom of the left hand of God."<sup>2</sup> The state is a divine gift for the repression of the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Emil Brunner, *Justice and the Social Order*, p. 174; *The Divine Imperative*, p. 446.

<sup>2</sup> *W.A.*, XLII, 79 and *W.A.*, LII, 26.



unrighteousness of the natural man and for leading him into an ordered social life. It is not in itself creative or productive. Its purpose is rather functional — to provide the necessary framework for the original orders of creation such as the family, the economic order, and the church.

It is not for the state to establish marriage, which is legitimate without the co-operation of the state. Nor is it the business of the state to engage in cultural, scientific, or religious activities. From the standpoint of the Bible all these "orders" take precedence over the state. For this reason the encroachment of the state upon these orders is one of the most disturbing and alarming signs of our age. The "Leviathan," as Thomas Hobbes designated it — a term revived in our day<sup>3</sup> — has frequently become a formidable drill sergeant. But regimentation of life spells disaster to the creative faculties of man. Life under a sergeant, to be sure, may be well disciplined, but it is a discipline from without, not from within. A disciplined soldier may be completely undisciplined inwardly. Regimentation is the poorest educational system ever devised. Under its regime life becomes dull and stereotyped, unimaginative and unproductive. While, in dealing with the highly complex form of modern life, the state may be right in issuing some directives, a planning society may easily become a planned society. The state becomes the warden of a prison and its citizens resemble inmates. All these tendencies are evil from the Christian point of view. Although

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Hutchison, *The New Leviathan* (1943).

Christian liberty is not an outward carnal thing (an outwardly dependent person may inwardly be free by the power of the Holy Spirit, and vice versa), suppression of civil liberties leads to a situation in which the ethical responsibility of man is slackened or even deadened.

### *Form of government*

While the state has its origin in the will of God, no form of government can claim such dignity. There is no such thing as a divine form of government. All forms are historically and culturally conditioned. The best form of government is the one which, in the long range, will best serve the needs of the people. For us democracy may be a highly treasured achievement because it puts teeth into the biblical view of the dignity of man. But it presupposes a thriving middle class, a progressive labor group, a fair distribution of wealth, and an educational system which creates an intelligent mass of voters. Where these prerequisites do not exist democracy is doomed to failure as a farce or a disguise for unscrupulous men to acquire power for their own benefit.

### *Law and justice*

The state is a complex entity. By its very nature it should have power to compel respect, submission, and obedience. It is by its power to enforce obedience to its will that a newly created political unit secures recognition as a member of international society from other states. By the same

force of compulsion it maintains its unity against the centrifugal tendencies in its own midst. But in both the acquisition and exercise of power there are sinister forces at work which defy ethical values. Taken as a whole, the state is the most brutal social institution on earth. It is little wonder that the apocalypses of Daniel and John represent the governments of the world under the symbols of wild and ferocious beasts. The state is a collective sinner in which we see our individual sins multiplied a million times. And yet the state should be an ethical body since it is meant to serve the good of its citizens. Its life, therefore, is subject to a divine command. From the biblical point of view, we must reject the Machiavellian proposition of a double standard of morality, one for the individual and another for the state — as if the diplomat could be an honest man in his private affairs but a professional liar in his public career. We must reject as unethical the motto, "Right or wrong, my country." History proves that every state built on lies has declined prematurely.

The ethical approach to political life does not necessarily exclude every sort of expansion. Some of the imperialism of recent times was not unethical per se. It makes a great difference from the ethical point of view whether or not the colonial peoples are regarded as a prey for exploitation. The latter type is well illustrated by the Spanish imperialism of the earlier centuries, the former by the treatment of the Philippines by the United States and the more recent developments in the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Like the individual, the state is, from the ethical point of view, a complex, contradictory being: good and evil are closely interrelated. With necessary changes, Luther's saying may well be applied to a nation: on every level of history is it *simul justus et peccator*. Leaving out of consideration the judgment of God on historical life, historical knowledge shows that no nation is either wholly good or bad. The flag of every nation is stained. A humble and contrite spirit is becoming to all peoples. History furnishes more than one example that in national life as well as in the life of an individual "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."<sup>4</sup>

Some people maintain that the state, like the church, should receive its directives from the gospel, that it should be governed by the "law of love." This view is an extreme example of the confusion between law and gospel. In the realm of the church it results in a perversion of the New Testament message: that which is spiritual is made a carnal and worldly thing. Consistently applied to the political realm, it would lead to disaster and destruction, because it leaves out of consideration the awful power of evil. The gospel is a message of love, forgiving, not imputing injustice. Since no one, however, obeys the will of God without faith, Luther remarks that a man "who would venture to govern an entire country or the world with the gospel would be like a shepherd who should place in one fold wolves, lions, eagles, and sheep together

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<sup>4</sup> I Pet. 5:5.

and let them freely mingle with one another and say, Help yourselves and be good and peaceful among yourselves; the fold is open, there is plenty of food, have no fear of dogs and clubs. The sheep, forsooth, would keep the peace . . . but they would not live long; nor would any beast keep from molesting another." For this reason, Luther concludes that the two realms, that of the church and that of the state, must be sharply distinguished, and both must be permitted to remain; "the one to produce piety, the other to bring about external peace and prevent evil deeds, neither is sufficient in the world without the other."<sup>5</sup> The state cannot be Christianized, in the proper sense of the term. Still it is not an amoral body. The state is the ordered relation of individuals and groups. It deals with men and not with things. In the realm of things the designations "good" and "bad" are out of place. Mathematics, for example, is a completely amoral science because it deals with figures. But political science is not so, for the statesmen and political leaders deal primarily with living human beings.

The concept of justice stands in need of further explanation. In the minds of many people law and justice are identical terms. In actual history, however, this is by no means the case. "Law" may be an expression far more of power than of justice, of might than of right.

As to the basic concepts of law, we notice two opposing schools of thought. There are those who adhere to the

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<sup>5</sup> P.E. III, 237.



teaching of natural law (*lex naturae*) as an expression of certain fundamental moral norms resting on a rational basis. This was the concept of law prevalent during the Middle Ages and the Age of Reason. On the other hand, there are the adherents to the concepts of positive law so called who maintain that all law has its roots in the will of the state, that it is simply an expression of an actual condition of power. That these laws are "just" is purely accidental, contingent upon the character of a given state. The biblical concept of justice ought not to be identified with either point of view. Yet since the days of the Enlightenment, the concept of natural law has been nothing else than a secularized metaphysical counterpart of the biblical view of creation. According to Scripture, the will of the Creator is the foundation of right. Because Christian ethics views life from the perspective of creation, it teaches an integral view of life. We exist in order to serve one another; this is the will of God. The Christian concept is theological, neither metaphysical nor positivistic. Considering the development of the idea of justice in modern life, from the theological, through the metaphysical, to the positivistic stage, we may apply the words of Ernest Renan: "We live by a shadow, by the fragrance of an empty vase; after us they will live by the shadow of the shadow."<sup>6</sup> This tragic development explains best the terrible decline of Western civilization, as witnessed by two

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted from an article by Anders Nygren on "Christianity and the Concept of Right," *The Augustana Quarterly*, July 1948, pp. 195-204.



world wars. Also, against this background the co-operation between the church and political liberalism in the countries occupied by the German National Socialists becomes quite understandable. Holding fast to the metaphysical concept of right democratic people everywhere regarded the church as their ally in the common defense of justice as they conceived it.

### *Political parties*

This brings us to the problem of whether the church should form a political party of its own. In normal times the answer must be negative. Clericalism is incompatible with the evangelical concept of both the church and the state. The church should rather educate its members to take seriously their calling in all walks of life, in order that the will of God be taken seriously in all relations of life. In addition, there are many political problems that cannot be determined by the Christian conscience. Such questions, for instance, as a choice between a monarchical or republican form of government, public or private ownership of mines or railroads, are not contingent per se upon ethical considerations. On the common ground of the Christian faith, various political or economical views are possible. The situation, however, is different in times of rampant social and political injustice.<sup>7</sup> When a state

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<sup>7</sup> Witness, for example, the spectacular rise of the "Christian Democrats" in the countries of western Europe. All these parties maintain a stand for humane values and good men in government. See the instructive article on "The Christian Democrats" in *Life*, August 29, 1949.

is in danger of losing its character as a "righteous state" the church should marshal its members for concerted political action. Likewise, when the major political parties are the mouthpieces of a morality that is avowedly non-christian or openly antichristian the church is faced with a similar responsibility. But a Christian political party is always to be considered an emergency measure. If large political groups take an antagonistic attitude toward the church the latter should first of all examine its own political record. It was this penitent insight into the failures of the church with respect to the labor class, for example, which led Christoph Blumhardt, Jr. to associate himself with the Social Democratic Party of Germany. In the same way, the leaders of the social religious movement of Switzerland, Hermann Kutter and Leonhard Ragaz, took the stand that a serious Marxian atheist may be closer to God than a theist who remains indifferent to the plight of the masses.<sup>8</sup>

### *Penal law*

Crime has its root in the brutal self-assertion of the human ego over against the life, honor, and property of one's fellow-men. For that reason we shall have criminals with us until the end of history. Consequently, no state can dispense with a penal code, the moral basis for which is to be seen in the right of self-defense on the part both of the individual and society. The penalty provided by the

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<sup>8</sup> Neve-Heick, *A History of Christian Thought*, Vol. II, p. 173.

codes of most states usually includes the payment of a fine, imprisonment, or capital punishment, although the latter has been abolished in many countries.

The primary aim of the penalty inflicted on a criminal is the protection of society against further assault on the part of the criminal. Other motives include correcting the criminal, deterring from crime, and the ideas of expiation and retaliation.

If these aims are to be realized several things have to be taken into consideration.

If penalty is to be corrective it must be administered in a humane manner. The administrative personnel must be of a high moral character and well trained in psychology. Actually our penal institutions have been, in many instances, breeding places of more crime and moral disintegration. The effect of a long prison term on the sexual conduct of the inmates, for example, is often very destructive, the inmates leaving the institution not as reformed beings but rather as individuals confirmed in the way of crime. From the Christian point of view, no penalty is morally justified which does not provide an environment conducive to moral recovery.

The question whether punishment serves as a deterrent of crime is highly problematical. Most likely it has little effect on a determined criminal though it may exercise a certain check on people who reveal slightly abnormal tendencies in their behavior.

The most controversial issue is the idea of expiation.

Defended in former times, the idea was entirely dismissed by Cesare Lombroso and the so-called sociological school of criminology. But the idea of expiation has a theological connotation, lying as it does at the basis of the Christian gospel. Bearing his cross, Jesus expiated for the sins of the world, as the Scriptures declare, and any human being who is not utterly without all moral feeling has the innate desire to compensate for the wrong he has done, once he sees that it is wrong.<sup>9</sup> When speaking of expiation, however, we must guard against a primitive desire for revenge, on the one hand, and against a holier-than-thou attitude, on the other. After all, organized society bears a great responsibility because of the injustice of its economic order and the harshness with which it treats everyone who cannot adapt himself to its standards. Society therefore must be included in the idea of expiation. For good reasons it has to bear the financial expenses involved in the maintenance of the penal institutions where, in many instances, for the first time in his life an individual may have wholesome food to eat and a decent place to sleep, all of which society denied him while he was at liberty.<sup>10</sup>

In concluding this section, we want to add that the

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<sup>9</sup> In Dostoevski's novel, *Crime and Punishment*, Sonia says, "Suffer and expiate for your sin by it (i.e. by confessing and bearing punishment), that's what you must do." p. 426.

<sup>10</sup> In this discussion we owe much to Emil Brunner's exposition in *The Divine Imperative*, pp. 474-478. Brunner, however, seems to approach too closely the standpoint of some representatives of the modern sociological school when he says that society "... is the first and the chief criminal" (p. 476). This view is unscriptural and is not in keeping with Brunner's emphasis on the moral nature of man.

social idea of crime and the biblical concept of sin must never be identified. The criminal code of a country is an expression of explicit law which is historically conditioned. What is labeled a crime by the state may be called a virtue by the Christian conscience, as for example, opposition against certain measures of a government. Likewise, the state takes action only when a criminal deed has been committed, while the gospel addresses itself to the heart of man. Before God we have sinned by thought, word, and deed. Consequently, civil righteousness and the righteousness of faith are two things that are worlds apart.

### *War*

In dealing with war, we are most painfully aware of the conflict between the Christian way of love and the exigencies of this world.

In historical perspective war seems to be unavoidable, for the law of conflict is an inherent part of historical existence. Might and right are not necessarily opposites. Nations rise and decline. The right of a dependent ethnic group to form a state of its own, for example, cannot be decided a priori on the basis of ethical considerations. A reasonable compromise or an appeal to a court of arbitration may have considerable success; but the final word may always rest with the sword. Considering the economic and military factors involved in the maintenance of a state, the creation of small national states may mean disruption of social life for a larger unit of people and turn

out to be the cause for future wars. As long as the law of the jungle prevails among the nations the problem of natural frontiers will always be a serious one. For this reason, for instance, the Wilsonian emphasis on "the right of self-determination of the peoples" was doomed to failure from its very inception.

Luther conceived of war as a necessary evil, as a means to restrain the unchristian and wicked. Seen in this perspective, he called the office of the soldier a "work of love" instituted for the protection of house and home, peace and honor. War was to him only "a small lack of peace" which was to serve as a check "upon a universal world-wide lack of peace."<sup>11</sup>

In our estimate of war we must take into consideration the nature and effect of modern warfare. It is no longer a contest between two gallant leaders, possessed of personal bravery, and their respective loyal warriors. Modern war is total war. There are no longer any noncombatants. The tools of modern warfare have rendered obsolete the distinction between fighting forces and noncombatant population. Since the days when the hunger blockade was applied against a whole nation the Western world has gone from bad to worse. Pacifism, therefore, has become utterly meaningless. Besides, if it is incompatible with the Christian faith to carry arms, it is just as inconsistent with the gospel to raise the wheat that will feed the army. And it

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<sup>11</sup> P.E., V, 36.



is especially unethical if anyone accepts higher prices and better wages on account of a war.

Prevention of war should be the main concern of every intelligent human being. From the human point of view, however, we seem not to have a ghost of a chance. Our only hope is the grace of God. Unless we shall rediscover that sense of unity which stems from belief in the Creator our civilization is doomed.

The bewilderment in which men find themselves today was well illustrated in the debate on war at Amsterdam. While all seemed to agree that war is "sin against God and a degradation of man," some said that modern war "can never be an act of justice." Others maintained that in the absence of impartial supranational institutions "military action is the ultimate sanction of the rule of law and that citizens must be distinctly taught that it is their duty to defend the law by force if necessary," while some even held (and others denied) "that entering a war may be a Christian's duty in particular circumstances." A third group finally was convinced "that Christians should refuse military service of all kinds."

Both the Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians usually distinguish between a war of aggression which, they hold, is unethical and a defensive war which they usually regard as ethically justified. This distinction has also the approval of many jurists and statesmen. In the London Agreement, August 8, 1945, signed by the four

major victorious powers of the war the act of "launching a war of aggression" is declared to be a criminal act.

However, it is often next to impossible to draw a sharp line between these two aspects of an armed conflict. Wars usually have many ramifications in the history and economic life of belligerent nations. Even the government which starts the conflict may not be guilty of outright aggression. For instance, in the Boer War at the turn of the century the Boers actually opened the hostilities but few neutral contemporaries or historians have ever charged this small nation with aggression. It will always be difficult to determine with precision whether a war is "just" or not.

### *Revolution*

When dissatisfaction with an existing government waxes strong and all proposals of reform fail, the conflict between the government in power and the opposition may result in civil war or revolution.

The problem for Christian ethics to answer is this: are church people ever right in supporting a revolution? In the past the Jesuits as well as leading Calvinists have openly defended the overthrow of a government by force. Luther, on the other hand, has been interpreted as having persistently opposed any form of violence against the government. This traditional view, however, is hardly tenable. True, the Reformer was opposed to the idea that the church should take up arms. The church must not go

to war, foreign or civil. A "holy war" or a "holy revolution" are, in his eyes, contrary to the very nature of the gospel. On the other hand, Luther fully realized that a government exists for the good of the people and that it ought to respect the moral order, as willed by the Creator. If a government is persistently violating the "common and divine law" by which God wants all the world to be ruled, Luther is ready, as he says, to kill such a tyrant "like a common murderer or highway robber."<sup>12</sup>

The ethics of revolution consists in the fact that it is undertaken with all the seriousness of the "calling" to save a nation from a corrupt or tyrannical government. This view has the Bible on its side. Scripture, in many instances, regards both foreign and civil wars as a divine visitation upon the kings of the earth. God himself is said to stir up the opposition against them. Consequently, a revolution in abnormal times may have its origin in the will of God just as in ordinary times the government is rooted in a divine order. The "right" of a revolution is dependent on the moral force which it releases in a nation. For a Christian there is no need of proof that no revolution is ever "pure" because all historical life is intrinsically involved in the sin of our existence.

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<sup>12</sup> *E.A.*, LXII, 207.

## The Race Question

The race issue is one of the most perplexing problems of modern times. The West's feeling of white superiority is met in the East and in Africa with resentment and hatred. Anti-Semitism is a disturbing factor in both Europe and America and, recently, also in the Arab world.

### *The meaning of race*

The word "race" designates the division of mankind which transcends national barriers and includes people who, in a broad way, have some identical physical traits.

While this definition may sound simple, it is actually a difficult task to decide conclusively which traits should be taken as a basis of classification.

To most people race is simply a matter of color. We admit that in general four main colors — white, black, yellow, and brown — separate great groups of people. But there are also a great many intermediary shades of color, so that color alone cannot make a satisfactory classification.

The difference in the color and form of the eye has received the attention of anthropologists. But at best this factor can only assist in classification. It can never be determinative of a race. The blue color of the eye seems to be limited to the white race, especially to the Nordic people. But "black" eyes are found everywhere. The slanting eye may be characteristic of some yellow people, but not all Asiatics have slanting eyes.

A third factor is the kind of hair, whether it is straight, lank, wavy, or kinky. In general, straight hair is found among the Mongoloid people of Asia and the Eskimo; wavy hair among the people of Europe, India, and Australia, and kinky hair among the Negroes and the natives of the Pacific islands. But again these differences in hair do not coincide with other differences in bodily traits which are just as important. There are also among the white people individuals who have straight hair or kinky hair.

A fourth factor is the shape of the nose. The chief difference is between the narrow nostrils of Europeans, Eskimos, and Arabs, and the flat nose which is characteristic of the Negro. Yet this mark, too, does not always respect the color line.

A fifth factor is body height. There are people noted for their height, and there are pygmy tribes as well. But in general, every group has tall men and short men.

Finally, the shape of the head has been considered to be the basis of determination. Anthropologists have divided the human family into three groups: narrow long-

headed people, medium longheaded people, and broad shortheaded people.

Most likely the corrolations of the head index and body height added to color may define racial characteristics in the most accurate way possible.

No race, however, is a purely natural entity today. Into the making of every race have gone the forces of history, the early migrations with their subsequent new influences of soil and climate, development of language, heroisms, sufferings, and the insights and discoveries of successive generations. More than any innate differences these historical accretions explain most plausibly the differences in temper and character which we observe among the races.

A distinction between race and what in German is called *Volk* (nationality) may be in order. As racial differences are primarily rooted in nature, the *völkische* character, i.e. differences of temper, are to a large degree the result of a common history — not necessarily of a common political history but rather of a common history of culture and civilization. Irrespective of the political unity and sovereignty of the United States, there is an American people made up of many races, but speaking a common language and following a definite pattern of life.

The fact that, in America, state and *Volk* coincide should not tempt us to minimize the distinction between race and *Volk*. Like the American people, the German people, for example, are also a heterogeneous group racially. Yet in contrast to the American people, since the



Middle Ages they have never been united in one state. But as a *Volk* they transcend both racial and national boundaries.

Another good illustration is Canada. Composed of two major groups, the British and the French, both of which have perpetuated their language and culture, Canada is not only one state but also one people, who in their common loyalty to the Canadian way of life transcend the cultural, and linguistic affiliations of the past.

### *Race prejudice*

Racial feeling is not inborn. Racism, the dogma that one ethnic group is by nature destined to hereditary superiority and another people to hereditary inferiority is a modern myth and superstition. Until the French Revolution there was very little of such feeling in any country.<sup>1</sup> The Old Testament emphasis on the difference between Israel and the Gentiles had its root in the religious calling of the chosen people. The feeling of superiority among the Greeks and Romans was culturally conditioned. Hence they held that "barbarians," i.e. men or tribes who had no Greek or Roman accomplishments, should be made to serve the cultured masters. No other justification of slavery was necessary.

Race prejudice, therefore, is not a natural problem, but a moral issue.

In the modern world it has its causes in a number of

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. James Bryce, *Race Sentiment as a Factor in History* (1915).

social factors. Racial antagonism, as we find it existing today, may be due to political or economic causes. Political tension and war are a fertile ground in which it can thrive. Or the difference in standards of living makes the Negro and Oriental laborer suspect in the eyes of the Western world. This fact has a large influence on the resolute determination of the United States, Canada, and Australia to limit the immigration of Asiatics, and, in turn, has aroused the bitter resentment of the Orientals. Just as in the days of the apostles, it is easy to stir men to fury when you can show them that by the presence of some foreigners their business may suffer.

Racial antagonism may also arise from differences in national temperament or character, or in difference in civilization, and consequently in social conventions and habits of thoughts and feeling. Language is a strong factor in creating a barrier between people.

All these factors create a feeling of superiority on the one hand, and of inferiority on the other. In the world today, the claims of the non-European races to equality are not given the attention they deserve.

### *The constraint of the gospel*

The Christian belief in the unity of mankind as the creation of God does not deny the differences between the races. The difference is to be respected as willed by God. But in Jesus Christ, God is also the Redeemer of every human being irrespective of racial peculiarities. In the

church he gathers men of every land and every tongue. The church is the body of Christ, transcending all racial, national, and social barriers. In Christ Jesus "there is neither Jew or Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female."<sup>2</sup> Yet this does not mean that in the realm of natural life these distinctions are to be radically eliminated. That evidently is impossible, for by faith in Jesus man is not unsexed, nor was slavery as a social institution abolished in the apostolic times; nor do cultural and national differences wither away under the radiance of the gospel. The grace of God does not put an end to the natural order.

On the other hand, all natural things are subject to the devastating working of sin. History especially is not an unveiled revelation of the divine will. It is the battleground between God and Satan, good and evil. This recognition injects a revolutionary spirit into the Christian faith. In faith we realize that the current superiority of the white race is an act of the Lord of heaven and earth. Conversely, the apparent inferiority of a race also has its cause in the counsel of God. It is likewise an historical development rather than an unalterable, natural factor. Historical superiority is not an achievement of man or of a race. Superiority obliges; the leading races have a responsibility toward the primitive ones.

In this respect some of the suggestions adopted by the

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<sup>2</sup> Eph. 3:28.

International Missionary Council Meeting at Jerusalem, 1928, are still pertinent.

"Where two or more races live side by side in the same country," the council believed, "the situation might be mitigated if steps were to be taken (1) to establish the utmost practicable equality in such matters as the right to enter and follow all occupations and professions, the right of freedom of movement and other rights before civil and criminal law, and the obtaining and functions of citizenship, subject always to such general legislation as, without discriminating between men on grounds of color and race, may be necessary to maintain the social and economic standards of the community as a whole . . . and (2) to secure that the land and other natural resources of the country are not allocated between the races in a manner inconsistent with justice and with the rights of the indigenous people."<sup>3</sup>

"Where a colonial government still exists," the council stated, "the ruling race should regard itself as entrusted with the duty to educate the backward races to a position where they can manage their own affairs and become independent."<sup>4</sup> The undisciplined and irresponsible colonial adventure of the recent past is indeed a serious blemish

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<sup>3</sup> The policies of the Malan government in the Union of South Africa are evidently a flagrant violation of this statement. What is most disturbing, however, is the backing of this policy by the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. But this is not the first time that such an attitude toward the Negro has been justified with a reference to Genesis 9:25.

<sup>4</sup> *The Christian Mission in the Light of Race Conflict*, published by the Oxford University Press, pp. 239 f.

on Western civilization and involves, for the church, an urgent call to missions. For only the Christianization of the East and of Asia can overcome the crisis which was created by the imperialistic expansion of the West and accentuated by the dissemination of communist ideology and the rise of communist power.

Concerning the Negro in the United States, the church should try to put teeth into the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments of the Constitution. On this point it has the consent of all noble-minded men and women.

A difficult problem is that of intermarriage of two widely different races. In regard to the biological effect of racial intermixture, nothing definite is known at the present state of investigation. As to the alleged deterioration of the descendants, the social environment in which the intermingling occurred has to be taken into consideration. In comparison with white people, hybrid races have suffered from many social disadvantages. Sexual attraction is a personal matter, but marriage, on the other hand, is a social institution. Considering, therefore, the many factors which are involved in any marriage, the church must be cautious in promoting a radical course. Yet it should speak out against the social prejudice of the average citizen. If, with their eyes open to the consequences, two individuals decide to make the adventure, Christian people violate the law of love if they treat them as social outcasts.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> J. A. Oldham, *Christianity and the Race Problem* (9th ed., 1933), pp. 171 ff.

Another perplexing problem for the church is that of interracial fellowship on the congregational level. Difficult though this problem may be in any form of church organization, it is articulated in America by our conception of a congregation as a voluntary association, providing through its organizations a great variety of social contact.

As far as the whole country is concerned, there is more than a grain of truth in the saying that the church is one of the last strongholds of segregation. White congregations including colored people are indeed few and far between.

Segregation always spells mutual distrust. It makes the ruling race haughty and gives to the others a feeling of inferiority and resentment. The spirit of Christ is violated when a fellow-believer is denied the common expression of love and justice. This does not mean that wherever a sufficient number of Negro Christians live in a community they may not organize as a separate congregation. Separation in freedom will more easily promote the cause of brotherly love than forced intermingling.

To a lesser degree the race sentiment also keeps Christian people of various European countries apart. And this fact is at the present time a strong obstacle to fuller Lutheran unity in both the United States and Canada. As experience teaches, racial consciousness does not necessarily become extinct with the passing of the mother tongue. The second or even third generation may feel a deep attachment to certain social and religious customs of their



fathers. There is nothing wrong in this per se; but it is sinful if we permit it to interfere with the actual needs of the present status of the church.

### *The Jewish problem*

Anti-Semitism is "a very real and persistent form of modern sickness." To be sure, there had been feeling against the Jews prior to the second half of the nineteenth century when anti-Semitism emerged as a political weapon. Imperial Rome was, to say the least, not very friendly toward the Jews. In the words of Tacitus, a Roman historian of the apostolic age, the Jews are an "opprobrium," a shameful infamy of the human race. But his attitude was conditioned by the religious exclusiveness of the Jews, which seemed to an enlightened Roman unreasonable and dangerous to the state. The misgivings which Christian Europe felt about the Jews had a religious note: as unbelievers the Jews could not be accepted as full members into the Christian society of the Middle Ages. The hour of emancipation for the Jews came during the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. In a very short time many of the intellectuals became spiritually divorced from the religion of their fathers. Some became political radicals — among them, Karl Marx. This situation offered itself as an opportunity for the conservatives and reactionaries to make the Jew the scapegoat of the ills of the times. Anti-Semitism became a political weapon in Germany, in Austria-Hungary, in France, and especially in Czarist Russia.

In the ugly atmosphere of political propaganda it was forgotten that not all Jews were radicals. The Jewish converts, Disraeli in Great Britain and F. J. Stahl in Prussia, for example, were among the recognized leaders of the conservative party of their countries. We may also mention the convert, F. A. Philippi, who was one of the staunch orthodox Lutherans of Germany in the nineteenth century. Likewise a convert from Judaism to the Christian faith was the mother of the Lutheran clergyman, Spitta, author of five well-known hymns which have been translated into the English language. These facts notwithstanding, the poisonous propaganda increased until marriage between an "Aryan" and a Jew was regarded as a defilement of the Nordic race. This madness reached its climax in the teaching and practice of the Hitler regime. But the defeat of Hitler has not settled the issue. The disease may break out again, not only in Germany but also in the Anglo-Saxon world. In addition, the partition of Palestine has made the Arab world very Jew-conscious.

Two things are essential for overcoming the crisis. First, our minds must be purged of the lies and deception which are woven into the fabric of anti-Semitism. The Jews are not different from any other nation. There are also God-fearing individuals and atheists, conservatives and radicals, noble-minded men and criminals to be found among them. "Of their race, according to the flesh, is Christ" <sup>6</sup>; but also Judas Iscariot who betrayed him. Moreover the laws of

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<sup>6</sup> Rom. 9:5.

our country, in fact, of any civilized country, must grant full protection to the Jew. We must become more conscious of the fact that discrimination before the law reflects first of all on those who practice it. On the other hand, the church as a body must not permit itself to become entangled in the purely political aspect of the problem such as the rehabilitation of the Jews in Palestine. Rather it must act as the good Samaritan doing well to both Jews and Arabs. It can ignore the plight of the Arab refugees no less than the horrors of Buchenwald. Secondly, the church must bring the gospel to the Jews. Mere humanitarianism will not save Israel. The Jewish problem is basically religious. Though it may be difficult for some to understand, the Jews are the only group which belong to "holy history" as a racial entity. The real tragedy of the Jews is their rejection of Jesus. But we of the Gentile world have no reason "to become proud, but stand in awe," as Paul writes to the Romans. "For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you."<sup>7</sup>

As in Germany, Luther has also been claimed by some American writers as a champion of anti-Semitism. This is particularly the case with the translation of Luther's *Von den Juden und Ihren Luegen* which appeared in May, 1948, under the title *The Jews and Their Lies* by Dr. Martin Luther, published by the "Christian Nationalist Crusade," St. Louis, Missouri. The translation may be called

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<sup>7</sup> Rom. 11:20 f. Cf. Otto Piper, *God in History* (1939), especially pp. 93 ff.

a well-organized attempt to mislead the public because the claim of the publishers is absurd that this book of Luther's has been kept "deliberately away from the eyes of his millions of admirers," and because almost five-sixths of the original text is omitted, in many instances these omissions are not even indicated. A reliable and scientific discussion of Luther's attitude is A. K. E. Holmio's *The Lutheran Reformation and the Jew*.<sup>8</sup>

Briefly stated, in his earlier years Luther believed that the Jews could be won for Christ if they were confronted with the pure gospel. He concludes his treatise of 1523, *Jesus Was Born a Jew*,<sup>9</sup> "If we want to help them, we must exercise not the law of the pope but the law of Christian love, receive them in the spirit of friendliness, permit them to work, so that they have cause and space to be with us and around us, to hear our Christian teaching and witness our Christian life. If some remain obstinate, what of it? Not every one of us is a good Christian."

But as he grew older, Luther changed. When he heard that some people had become converts to Judaism and when three Jews approached Luther suggesting that he also renounce Christ, he became disillusioned. He replied with the quite lengthy treatise, *About the Jews and Their Lies*,<sup>10</sup> in which he urges the princes to destroy their synagogues and homes, to confiscate their religious literature, and to curtail their civic rights. However, nowhere does

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<sup>8</sup> Hancock, Michigan: Lutheran Book Concern, 1949.

<sup>9</sup> E.A. XXIX, 45 ff.

<sup>10</sup> E.A. XXXII, 99 ff.

he show a trace of racial antagonism. On the contrary, he credits the Jews with being the descendants of the most noble people in the world. His antagonism is conditioned throughout by the religious activities of the contemporary Jews, not by any racial feeling.

## Social and Service Clubs

Besides the necessary political and economic orders, there are free associations which not only exist for personal pleasure but also for cultural development and social service. The idea of the club as "a company of persons associated for a common object" is deeply ingrained in our Anglo-Saxon culture.

A bewildering number of clubs exist today. According to their aims, we may classify them as professional and general associations — art, music, literature, science, political, philanthropic, athletic, and so on. Furthermore, they may be subdivided with respect to the conditions of membership: sex, age, education, religion, race.

Some are church-related. Some impose no religious test upon their members and others may be openly irreligious. Membership in a club obviously cuts through established lines of family and church life. It may split both into opposing factions. A club may be considered a healthy institution if it serves a useful purpose in the development and expression of human personality, or when it offers



its members an opportunity for social service. In such cases clubs are a real asset to any culture. Yet they may also become a disruptive force if they pursue narrow, selfish ends. The time which they require must also be taken into consideration. In many instances they actually demand of a man or woman many precious hours to which their families and church have a first claim. Many clubs recognize this fact and try to alleviate the situation by arranging periodically for special family gatherings.

A special form of the club is the secret society or lodge. In evaluating them, Christian people are sharply divided. Some Lutheran synods are definitely against them; no communicant member is permitted to belong to them. Likewise, the Roman Catholic church has always opposed them, while the major non-Lutheran Protestant denominations take an attitude of indifference. Actually many of their prominent clerical and lay members are active in the lodges.

For lack of space we cannot enter upon the many theories of the origin of Freemasonry. Besides they are dismissed by leading Freemasons as sheer fables. In the *Encyclopedia Americana*, the author, who himself is a Mason, says that "the consensus of reliable historical opinion affirms that the premier Grand Lodge of England" was organized June 24, 1717, in London. Its origin is to be seen in the guilds of the Middle Ages which through a gradual transformation of operative masons had been transformed into societies of nonoperative masons for the

promotion of sociability, ideals of personal morality, brotherhood, and peace. These lodges had a distinctly Christian character. The movement which is known in Masonic history as the "revival" effected their transfer from a Trinitarian basis to a general religious concept of life. This attitude was rooted in the reaction of many English thinkers against the bloody religious wars of the preceding century. The deists, as these thinkers were called, were in search of a religion broad enough to include the different factions of the country. In the Anglo-Saxon world this spiritual foundation has remained basically unchanged. In Germany some of the lodges have at times subscribed to a Trinitarian creed, while in France Masonry has drifted into anticlericalism and atheism.

Although the lodges believe in the brotherhood of man, they barred Jews from membership in Germany, and excluded the Negro from their fraternities in America. Likewise the rise of nationalism at the time of the first World War disrupted the fellowship of Germany and the Allied countries.

In Europe, Freemasonry was adopted by the upper classes. The lodges frequently enjoyed the special favor of the ruling houses. In America, too, they often became a key to personal promotion and to the satisfaction of vanity.

According to the *Masonic Encyclopedia* by Albert G. Mackey, Freemasonry is neither Christianity, nor Judaism, nor Buddhism, nor any other historical religion. Neither is

it a substitute for any form of historical religion. Although it emphasizes the virtuous life, it supplies no scheme of redemption for sins. Basically it is belief in God and in eternal life. In other words, it adheres to a spiritual interpretation of human existence.

Some evangelical Christians, however, take exception to the fact that Freemasonry in America by-passes the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and that in its ritual it does not recognize Jesus as the Saviour of the world. Yet this does not mean that Freemasonry actually denies these important facts of the Christian faith. It only implies that the order as such does not want to commit itself in these matters. But it leaves room for the individual member to seek salvation where it is to be found, i.e. in Christ Jesus.

The real issue, as we see it, is not the alleged religious naturalism of the lodges. Rather it is this: can a conscientious believing Christian unite with an adherent of another religious faith in rendering worship to the one God who is the Maker of us all? In a church service this is impossible, for it is the purpose of the church to proclaim that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," except the name of Jesus Christ. To omit the name of Jesus in the proclamation of the church is to deny him. But the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ is not the only knowledge of God which man has received. God is constantly revealing himself also in nature, history, and the conscience of men. The validity of this "natural revelation" of God, although

seriously challenged by Karl Barth, has always been an integrated part of Protestantism. By means of a natural knowledge of God, it teaches, man knows that there is a personal and omnipotent divine Being, who has created the world and still preserves and rules all things and who is holy and just, demanding what is good and punishing what is evil. In this sentiment, Freemasonry gladly concurs, at least in principle. Can it, therefore, be sinful for an institution — that does not want to offer a scheme of salvation — to limit its religious emphasis to these universal truths? Personally we are inclined to believe that such a creed is of great significance for the cultural pattern of society. It is a basis on which Christians and Jews, conservatives and liberals can unite in rendering effective opposition to a materialistic and totalitarian ideology which threatens to engulf our civilization.

This does not mean that membership in a lodge may not be fraught with special temptation. The emphasis laid on universal religious truths which are known apart from Jesus Christ may easily breed the spirit of syncretism where the distinctive marks of the Christian faith are obscured, the Second and Third Article of the Apostles' Creed obliterated from the religious consciousness, and the qualitative difference between Jesus and Mohammed or Buddha, for example, effaced from the mind of the people. This certainly was the case in the age of deism and rationalism when modern Freemasonry came into being. To meet this danger effectively, the church must

be steadfast in proclaiming the pure gospel of the New Testament.

What has been said in criticism of Freemasonry applies with such changes as are necessary to other similar organizations, such as the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, the Modern Woodmen of America, Eastern Star, and the rest. The main purpose of these lodges is beneficiary and philanthropic.

The service clubs such as the Rotary International (organized in 1905), Kiwanis (founded in 1915), and other organizations should also be included here. They are not secret societies. They have accepted the ideal of service. They intend to acquaint business and professional men with each other, to develop a high standard of professional ethics, and to promote international understanding, good will, and peace. Undoubtedly, these organizations have rendered a fine service to many American communities. However, a Christian man should not permit these clubs to slacken his interest in the social work of the church. True, as the Apostle Paul says, Christians shall do good to all men, but he adds, "especially to those who are of the household of faith." Our suffering brethren in the faith should be our first concern. In addition, the distinctive Christian approach to welfare work must always be kept in mind.

## Christian Faith and Science

The conflict between the Christian faith and the modern world comes into sharpest focus when we try to relate the spiritual implications of the gospel to modern science.

Science deals with the composition of matter and with the laws underlying its operation. It is concerned with the quest for truth in the realm of nature.

Science is in itself something natural, not religious or ethical. It does not ask what is right but rather what is factual. Within its own realm, therefore, it is autonomous. To mention, for example, the most objective of all the sciences, mathematics, the Christian faith has no effect on the rules of arithmetic. "Two plus two equals four" is a truth which neither faith nor atheism can change.

Notwithstanding this fact, science is not unrelated to the religious or ethical quest of man, because the scientist is a man created in the image of God. Matter, likewise, is a creation of God. He also has laid down the rules of arithmetic.

As created in the image of God, man can rise above



the material world and regard it as an objective entity. It is precisely in this detachment from the world that man achieves spiritual freedom. He gains freedom not by technical skill and mastery. The way to freedom rather lies in man's theoretical knowledge of the world. In this respect man is unique among all the creatures on earth.

To the primitive man the world is animated. This means that, in his eyes, it is an agent like man himself. Hence the primitive man is less free than civilized man. He regards himself as subject to spiritual beings that reside in the material world. He fears and worships nature. This is the very essence of paganism.

In this context, the Christian gospel offers redemption to man by putting both man and nature in a proper relation to the Creator. The gospel liberates man from the enslaving forces of nature. It restores the real dignity of man.

Modern man tries to gain freedom and establish his independence in a purely naturalistic way, i.e. by relying on his own innate spiritual resources. Here it makes very little difference whether man tries to accomplish his freedom in an atheistic way by denying the existence of God or in the way of the seventeenth-century deists who relegated God to a "first cause," ruling out the reality of divine providence as expressed, in particular, in the biblical understanding of revelation, miracle, and prayer.

Because he regards the world as animated, to primitive man the world is an object of veneration. To the biblical

man, too, the world is holy because it is the handiwork of God. For modern man the world is nothing else than an object of ruthless exploitation. Fruitful as modern science may be for the control of nature, it has worked itself out inevitably as a disintegrating and destructive force in human affairs. Modern science has its root in the rational spirit of the ancient Greeks. It made its first appearance in the Christian West at the time of the Renaissance. But it did not come to its own until the seventeenth century. Ever since it has succeeded in putting under its control all departments of life.

Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo blazed the trail in astronomy and physics. A little later, Newton achieved the final triumph for which the others had labored. Before him, scientists believed in general laws from which they deduced detailed implications. Newton, however, put science on the inductive basis. All facts must be based on experience and observation. This being so, they must be regarded as tentative only. They are always liable to correction because new facts may at any time be perceived which are inconsistent with accepted theories.

In this world of science there is no place for divine teleology. Circumstances occur not through any purposive reference to man's good, but in accordance with their own necessary laws. Salvation for man lies in his adjustment to these mathematical laws by which the world is governed. A special revelation of God in Christ is unnecessary because man knows of himself the true nature of things.

Miracles simply do not occur, and prayer is useless, for God is nothing but a First Cause who lets the world run in accordance with the laws laid down in the beginning.

The spiritual crisis thus inaugurated in the seventeenth century was accentuated in the nineteenth century by the agnosticism of Kant, Herbert Spencer, and others, and by the naturalism associated with the name of Darwin. These thinkers were not atheists, for they did not presume positively to deny the existence of God. They simply maintained that they did not know about matters which lie beyond conclusive empirical verification.

Applied to the study of man, psychology began to interpret personality in the terms of biology and behaviorism. Man is to be studied as an animal is studied. His conduct may be treated merely as forms of response to definite stimuli that are conditioned by his physical nature. Man is neither free nor morally responsible for his activities.

Against the background of this "scientific" outlook on life, modern man maintains that there is no such a thing as absolute truth in the world. Everything is relative, religion as well as ethics. Nothing is to be accepted unless it has been verified by observation and experience. We do not know if there is a God for we cannot prove his existence in a way acceptable to the exact sciences. But we know from observation and experience that everything in the world is conditioned by natural laws. No one

knows what is in store for man after he dies. Religion is nothing but superstition.

This is the real predicament of modern man. From the standpoint of the Christian faith, this scientism is the real antichrist of our modern age. The only difference between us and the peoples behind the iron curtain is this, that in the Western democracies the state does not take sides in this issue whereas in Russia and her satellite countries scientism has the official backing of the communist governments.

The church has tried to meet the challenge of scientism, in two fundamentally different ways.

Some Christian thinkers joined in a movement of retreat. Accepting the conclusions of the scientists as valid, step by step they trimmed the ramifications of a religious organic outlook on life until the Christian gospel was reduced to a mere code of humanitarian ethics. This attitude is known as liberalism or modernism.

The other group, the fundamentalists, defied every proposition of science and fought against them in the name of an infallible Bible. The conflict centered mainly around three problems: the biblical view of space, the biblical view of time, and the biblical narrative about the earliest history of mankind. The fundamentalists of every denominational affiliation speak with one voice in maintaining that the Bible, although it is no textbook of natural science, speaks with authority whenever it touches a problem of natural science. In the seventeenth century,

the Roman Catholic church took the lead, burning Giordano Bruno at the stake and forcing Galileo to recant. Since the middle of the last century, Protestants have been most vociferous in condemning Darwin.

Evangelical Christianity cannot follow fundamentalism, for scientific data and historical facts cannot be discredited by an appeal to a belief in the plenary inspiration of the Bible. This basic mistake of fundamentalism is that it equates the Bible with divine revelation. The two are not identical. Revelation consists in a series of historical events culminating in the incarnation of Christ. The Scriptures, on the other hand, are the primary witness to these events. As real historical documents they also reflect the cultural pattern of the time when they came into being. This cannot be otherwise. Faith in God the Creator remains entirely unaffected by either the Copernican or Darwinian view of nature. The abusive language on the part of some Christian people with respect to the scientists is no credit to the Christian faith.

On the other hand, the scientists, too, have frequently violated some basic principles of their own philosophy. The law of causality which seems to be the first article of a scientific creed cannot be used effectively to discredit the Christian faith in God as Creator. Kant insisted that the cosmological proof for the existence of God (nothing moves without being moved—hence God is the prime mover) cannot be used to establish the being of God because the concept of causality is not valid apart from



human experience. Since evidently no individual has any experimental knowledge of the beginning of the world, this law cannot be used to exclude the creative activity of God. In addition, the law of causality is nothing more than a statistical description of the behavior of physical entities. Like every other scientific proposition it is descriptive only. Science cannot truthfully commit itself concerning that which remains unexplored. It cannot say with dogmatic certainty that the law of causality is universal because science has not been able to investigate all the potentialities of the universe. Of late the law of causality has become, to some extent, a matter of doubt even to some leading scientists, Heisenberg, for example.

Likewise, the one-sided emphasis which science puts on the intellect as the only avenue to reality is doctrinaire and out of touch with life. In dealing with matter, scientific knowledge is abstract and general. The chemical formula for water, for example, is true at all times and everywhere. But life cannot be expressed in a chemical or physical formula. Life is not matter, it is not a "become" but rather a "becoming." I cannot know another person as a purely objective entity. To answer the need of life our thinking must be more comprehensive. It must include all the potentialities which lie concealed in human nature. Scientism, therefore, has a chilling effect on life. In the thin air of intellectualism, no fellowship, no love can flourish.<sup>1</sup> Brunner is right when he says that the devastat-

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, the striking confession of Henry C. Link, *The Return to Religion* (1937).



ing effect of intellectualism increases the more it deals with that which is close to the personal center of man and that it decreases the more it refers to something that is removed from the personal center.<sup>2</sup>

In summing up the relation between science and faith, the more a scientific proposition deals with a purely objective fact of nature, the less it depends on faith. It would be sheer nonsense to speak of Christian mathematics or Christian chemistry. But the nearer a proposition is to the personal, the more it is dependent on faith. Most certainly it is not nonsense to speak of a Christian concept of marriage, economics, and the state. Contrariwise, a Christian must not regard his faith as a supplementary or additional source of scientific knowledge. His faith in Christ does not supply him with what he lacks in the intellectual sphere. A Christian may not only be a very poor mechanic, he also may be a very incompetent statesman because he lacks the genius required for such a task. To elect a Christian to a responsible position in the state does not inevitably mean that we shall have better government. Though he may be blameless ethically, a Christian candidate may be utterly incompetent for his office.

Science, then, is always a blessing and a curse. Especially in the atomic discoveries of the recent past, it seems that man has overreached his ethical capacities, for too many in our modern society are intellectual giants but moral dwarfs. The scientific quest remains true to the divine

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<sup>2</sup> *The Divine Imperative*, p. 495.

intention only if it maintains its due regard for the sacredness of life, as instituted by the Creator.

## What Makes a Church Christian?

The church is the community of believers called and gathered by the gospel. As such it is both the workmanship and workshop of the Holy Spirit. The extent of the church is known to God alone, for faith is primarily a condition of the heart. The church, therefore, is essentially "invisible," its membership cannot be counted by men. Yet all the believers are gathered by the Holy Spirit in a communion which has received the commission from the Head of the church to proclaim the gospel and administer the sacraments. The communion of believers is of necessity a worshipping communion. This means that the church is also a visible and tangible body. Since the Holy Spirit works mediately through the Word and sacraments the two entities, i.e. the visible and the invisible churches, cannot be divorced. The invisible church comes into being through the visible church; the true church is realized through the work of the empirical church. A radical skepticism of the visible church leads to a denial of the Lordship of Jesus.

The Lord has entrusted a twofold task to the church.

The first and supreme one is the proclamation of the gospel, which includes the administration of the sacraments as the visible Word. The preaching of the Word gives root and direction to all the work of the church. Secondly, being a genuine communion, the church engages in the work of helping love. From its very inception the "serving at tables" was co-ordinated with the proclamation of the Word. In addition, as a communion of believers the church can never be absorbed by the state or a humanized society.

Almost from the beginning of Christianity two fundamentally different emphases have existed side by side. The one is the institutional, the other the social concept of the church. The institutional view understands the church primarily as an external organization. Because of the stress it lays on the organizational character of the church, the institutional interpretation concerns itself with the problem of organizational continuity. This continuity it seeks to maintain by the transmission of authority under the auspices of a legitimately ordained priesthood. Examples of this view are the Greek, Roman and Anglican churches, and the High-Church Lutherans of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The social concept, on the other hand, sees the church essentially as a company of those who are truly Christians. Characteristic of this view is a basic spiritualism: the true church is visible only to God. In many instances, this

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<sup>1</sup> See our article "High-Church Tendencies in Nineteenth Century Lutheranism," *The Augustana Quarterly*, April, 1946, pp. 99-111.

spiritualism is closely associated with a puritanic and predestinarian view of life. In matters of organization the emphasis is on local self-government as with the Donatists of the ancient church, the Anabaptists in the age of the Reformation, and the English Dissenters.

In comparison with these views, the Lutheran confessions teach that the unity of the church cannot consist in a uniformity of ceremonies, for history shows that these have not been uniformly observed. Likewise, they refuse to interpret "saints" in either a moralistic or a predestinarian sense. The "saints" are the believers. The church is the body of Christ. As such it is a living organism, historically active and perceptible. The church is indeed a body among other bodies in human society. It, therefore, partakes of the ills that befall a historical body. It can suffer from the imperfection of its members. It can be rent asunder by schisms and distressed by heresies. It can be persecuted and attacked. But without a body the life of the church would be inoperative and ineffective, and without life the body would be a corpse.

### *How the church is built*

The church as a spiritual body is built from above. It is the workmanship of the Holy Spirit. It is not the sum total either of individual Christians or of local congregations. Rather the latter are the manifestation of the church in time and space.

On the other hand, the empirical church builds itself

from below. The local congregation has priority over synods or national churches because the office of the keys is entrusted to its members. No synod or national church possesses any spiritual power or prerogative beyond and above those held by a local congregation. However, synods and national churches do not exist only as a matter of administrative expediency. They, too, have a spiritual significance, testifying to the essential unity of the church as the Body of Christ. Neither an individual nor a local congregation can maintain an isolationist position without endangering its own spiritual life.

### *Church and state*

Church and state are grounded in the will of God, the state being an order of natural life, the church a creation of God's free grace. In both orders, therefore, they who exercise power are immediately responsible to God.

Luther sets forth the truth implied in this observation in his teaching of the "two kingdoms" or "two governments," expressing respectively the distinctive functions of Law and Gospel. The Law is the guardian of good and evil. By its very nature it is retributive and lies at the basis of the state. It cannot create the church as the communion of believers who, being unconditionally forgiven, are called to forgive unconditionally those who do them wrong.

Because of this fundamental difference, both church and state are indispensable for the realization of the whole will



of God on earth. Membership in the church does not terminate membership in the state. Christians actually live in two realms. Paul, whose citizenship as a Christian is in heaven (Phil. 3:20), never renounced his Roman citizenship (Acts 16:37).

But as a Canadian or American Christian faces the reality of his dual citizenship, two factors in particular call him to ethical vigilance, decision, and action. One of them is the tendency of the contemporary state to control the life of the individual more and more because it has become a welfare state. [Cf. the compulsory welfare and old age pension plan of the Canadian government and the social security provisions of the American government.] This intrusion into the freedom of the individual is the more dangerous because the state is a "power center" which, although divinely ordained, is always subject to the temptation of the power demon. When the government is in the wrong, the thing to do is to launch our prayers as a mighty weapon in overthrowing an unrighteous government. In Canada and America Christians are a part of the people who rule themselves according to the democratic principle of popular self-government. They are directly responsible for the existing wrong. The enemy of the church, therefore, is within the church. We as Christians must at times pray against ourselves as citizens.<sup>2</sup>

With respect to the legal relation between church and state, broadly speaking, two different types have emerged

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<sup>2</sup> G. Elson Ruff, *The Dilemma of Church and State*, p. 944.

in history: the national church type and the free church type. In seeking to reach all and to permeate all the orders of life with the gospel, the church is justified in organizing itself as a national or territorial church in which it seeks to create and preserve a general Christian culture out of which can grow a personal Christian faith. This church type still dominates the thinking of the great majority of European Christians.

America has become, under the guidance of God, the classical country where the free church type was given a real chance to demonstrate its peculiar vitality and strength. This type has the advantage that the church is entirely free from interference on the part of the state with respect to its own internal life and order. It also has taught American Christianity the practice of stewardship to a degree not known in the Old World. But it also has its peculiar dangers. Though free from the state, a congregation or even a larger church body may easily become a tool in the hand of the rich and ambitious members in its own midst. The members of a free church are also members of the state. The tensions between the two, therefore, remain. In our own days the tension is accentuated because of the growing influence of the modern state over the personal lives of all citizens.

The relation under discussion raises another problem for the Christian citizen. Since a Christian is to live by "the law of love," how can he participate in the execution of justice as represented by the state? Are love and justice not

exclusive of each other? This is indeed the attitude of some minor churches. But actually the two do not exclude each other. According to the Bible, the wrath of God is a terrible reality. Without it his love would lose its character of holiness; it would be reduced to mere complacency. His love is a necessary reaction against evil. In the same way, the civil offices for the constraining of evil perform a divine function in society. A Christian judge is not living, as it were, by a double standard of morality. The upholding of justice by an officer of the state is not contrary to the Christian motivation of his life as grounded in love. The two aspects of his life are not contradictory at all, just as love and wrath are no opposites in God. In either case, love reacts against evil in order to maintain the universal importance of its own order.

### *Church unity*

The one church of Christ is organized not only in national or geographical churches, but also in a multitude of diverse denominations.

Because of the diversity of spiritual gifts there existed a multiplicity and diversity of life in the apostolic churches. Each denomination may be said to express to a certain extent a peculiar and unique mark of the Spirit. However, the real cause of this development is generally to be seen in the perversion which the gospel suffered both in doctrine and practice. The Reformation would not have divided Western Christianity if the Church of Rome had

been a penitent church. Nevertheless, we are still one in Jesus Christ, and he is not divided. All churches have in common the Scriptures, the Lord's Prayer, baptism and the Supper as well as a great number of hymns. When we sing them we are not aware of being separated from the writer though he may have been a Catholic or a Methodist. Besides, we all bow in similar expressions of faith, penitence, and thanksgiving.

However, despite this apparent unity, serious differences remain, chief among these are the nature of the church and the ministry, the meaning of the sacraments, the proper relation between Law and Gospel, and the ways of worship. In view of the ecumenical movement it seems to be easier for churches to get together on the larger world level than face to face on the community level.

What, then, is the proper attitude for a Christian as he has to face this problem in his own community? First, we must realize that all knowledge is subjectively conditioned. "We know in part," according to the limitations of our own nature. This fact must make me humble and willing to grant my fellow Christian the benefit of the doubt. He too may be convinced that his interpretation of the faith is in keeping with the word of God. Considering this fact, we must, secondly, be ready always to re-examine our own position, in the light of the New Testament. Only a serious study of the Bible will lead the churches out of the confusion of theological tongues. Recognizing an individual

of another church as a brother in the faith, I cannot without sin deny him spiritual fellowship.

Nevertheless, serious differences often keep us apart. The free service of a Baptist will often appear to a Lutheran empty and unbearably subjectivistic while, *vice versa*, a rich liturgical service may leave a Baptist cold and unmoved. Chief among the differences, however, is the Lord's Supper. Lutherans require "sound doctrine" before a person can be admitted to the table of the Lord, while the Orthodox and Anglican Christians hold that no communion is valid except where there is a properly ordained minister in apostolic succession. Personally, we believe we are true to our Lutheran heritage when we maintain that a communion is valid wherever a church follows the simple directives of the biblical narrative. A person's faith does not make the sacrament; its validity depends on the promise of Christ. Hence, a wrong interpretation of the relation between the body and blood of Christ and the earthly elements does not invalidate the rite. A Roman Catholic receives no more and a Baptist no less than Christ has promised to give in this ordinance of his church. In order not to compromise with the truth we should in ordinary circumstances not take part in a communion service of another denomination. However, to be present occasionally at such a service in a prayerful mood would be a real testimony to both the unity and truth which we find in the gospel. Since Christ is not divided, the church will remain essentially one:



## THE CHRISTIAN IN THE WORLD

Her charter of salvation one Lord, one Faith, one Birth;  
One holy Name she blesses, partakes one holy Food,  
And to one hope she presses, with every grace endued.

To guard against misunderstanding, this must be said. When we speak about other churches we have in mind only those denominations with whom there is no contention or dispute, as Luther says in the Smalcald Articles, concerning the doctrine of the Divine Majesty "since we on both sides confess them." Churches or individuals that deny the Trinity of God and the deity of Christ are outside of the Christian faith. With them a Christian can have no spiritual fellowship. The only proper attitude becoming a faithful Christian is that of bearing testimony to the gospel before him.

### *Work of the church*

The chief work of the church is the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. For this reason the institution of the Christian Sunday and of the festival days grounded in the history of Jesus and the church are indispensable for the life of the Christian community. For good reasons, therefore, the church expects of the state that it co-operate in protecting and preserving among our people the Christian way of life. This does not mean that the state ought to enforce the puritanic idea of a Christian Sabbath which tends to deprive the people of the enjoyment of nature and of participating in cultural affairs on Sundays.



## WHAT MAKES A CHURCH CHRISTIAN?

The proclamation of the Word must not be divorced from the social and charitable work of the church. This work can never be replaced by the welfare work of the state. Stemming from faith in Christ, it is able to meet the need of the individual in a way that is wholly unknown to the social welfare worker.

In order to carry out its work, the Lord of the church has instituted the office of the ministry. The episcopal-minded churches base the validity of the ministerial acts on the so-called apostolic succession of the clergy. Yet this doctrine has no basis in the New Testament. The apostles have no successor; their office was unique in that they were the eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus. The continuity of the church is warranted not by the apostolic succession, but rather by the succession of believers. On the other hand, the office does not have its origin in the general priesthood of all believers. The latter is no office at all. It is rather a term describing the spiritual nature of the believers.

A candidate for the ministry must meet two requirements: he must have received an inward call through the working of the Holy Spirit, and he must qualify as physically and intellectually capable. Of these two requirements the first one is of primary importance for an educated minister with little or no spirituality is "as a sounding brass or tinkling cymbal."

Since the office has its root in the commission of Jesus it is, dogmatically speaking, a matter of indifference whether the external call is issued by a single congregation or in

the name of a group of congregations, i.e. synods, for service in a larger field.

The theological schools should be church-related. In this respect our American system is closer to the ideals of the Reformation than that of the European countries where the theological faculties have remained departments of the state universities, although the latter are no longer organically related to the church and a Christian government as in the days of the Reformation.

### *The place of women*

The Incarnation is a turning point in the history of womanhood. In ancient Greece and Rome, as well as in the Mosaic Law, the place of women was quite subordinate to that of men. But among the earliest disciples of Jesus were a number of faithful women. Already in Paul's time women were active in the diaconate. Following this example, the church has at all times availed itself of the beneficial service of women in nursing the sick, administering to the poor, and in teaching.

But may women also be admitted to the public ministry of the church? On this issue the churches are divided. While the proposition is definitely rejected in the Catholic churches, it is admitted, in principle, by most of the great non-Lutheran denominations of our country, although the number of ordained women pastors has always been very small. If memory serves us right, the question never was

an issue in any of the Lutheran bodies. However, the Danish church has some ordained women pastors.

The objection of the churches is based mainly on Paul's remark in I Corinthians 14:34, "The women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak." Luther gave a sensible judgment on this passage. To him the words of Paul are not an absolute prohibition. He interpreted them as a prohibition to such speaking as implies the repudiation of the priority of man. "Where there is no man to preach," he says, "it is a necessity for women to preach."<sup>3</sup> Paul has in mind only what was ordinarily regarded as proper in his days in a regularly established congregation. But this did not exclude the possibility that at other times women were moved by the Spirit to prayer and prophecy.

The apostolic injunction under consideration is similar to the other statement of Paul that a woman should have her head veiled in church. Commenting on this passage Henry E. Jacobs remarks, "The Jews prayed with veiled faces, in order to express their great reverence of God. . . . The Greeks, on the other hand, required that the head should be uncovered when sacred rites were performed. It was natural for the Greek custom to be followed at Corinth. It was supported by the consideration of the new relation in which the Christian stands to God in the New Testament." It was natural for the women to follow the new custom. But the veil was a sign and token

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<sup>3</sup> *E.A.*, XII, 347; 28, 51.

of their relation to their husbands, not a simple attire for prayer. Paul was concerned lest the new freedom in Christ should be abused. In addition, in the eye of society an uncovered head and shorn hair were the signs of a prostitute.<sup>4</sup> Both injunctions of Paul are evidently not suited as a source of canon law. Just as in our Western society no woman commits a breach of the moral law when she is seen unveiled in public so she commits no sin when she comes to church without a hat. Likewise, no church body can categorically deny a woman the right to speak in the church. Nevertheless, a Christian woman will respect the limitations which her sex imposes upon her in the work of the church and will understand that these limitations are essentially not different from similar restrictions imposed upon her in many other fields of activity.

### *Christian Stewardship*

According to the New Testament, giving is an essential part of the Christian life. Two of the great parables of our Lord, the parables of the unjust steward and of Dives, deal with the problem of a wise and god-willed use of man's earthly possessions. Paul also teaches that "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." His teaching of giving may be summed up in four concise statements: give liberally, give cheerfully, give regularly, and give in proportion to the blessings you have received from God. Giving, therefore, is an integral part

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<sup>4</sup> *The Lutheran Commentary*, VIII, 62 f, 115 ff.

of our church services. The offering is the congregation's spontaneous response to the proclamation of the gospel.

In recent years the principle of tithing has been stressed by some of the great Protestant denominations.

The history of tithing is long and intricate. In ancient times it was one way in which a king collected tribute from his subjects. As a religious offering, tithing could be either a singular event occasioned by special circumstances, or it could be commanded by the law as a regular tribute of the people—tithes from the chief agricultural products of the land, or the first-born of the herds. In Malachi 3:8 ff., God reproves the people for their slackness in responding to these requirements of the law.

In the New Testament period, our Lord did not re-emphasize the principle of tithing. In fact, he spoke somewhat disparagingly about the punctilious attitude of the Pharisees with respect to it. Living in a dispensation of grace, New Testament giving cannot be circumscribed by the letter; it is rather a matter of the Spirit. A church body, therefore, cannot with a clear conscience prescribe tithing to its members as the most perfect way of giving. The principle is too inflexible. Besides, in the Old Testament, it presupposes a uniformity of possessions and income which no longer exist. The advice of Paul that each person should give "as God has prospered him," is actually "a more excellent way," for it leaves room for two important factors. In the first place, the proper support of his family is the primary obligation of a Christian. Giving, therefore,

may decrease in proportion to the number of a man's dependents. Secondly, the percentage of giving should increase in proportion to the actual income of a person. It makes a world of difference whether, for instance, a family of three people have \$5000 to spend annually or a family of five has to live on \$2000. Even if the former family gives \$500 to the church, in terms of actual sacrifice it has given less than the latter family which has given only \$50 or even less. In preaching stewardship, the church must be moved by the principle of justice, which is also the way of Jesus, because it is the way of love.



## Can Our Civilization Be Christian?

The Christian life is not mere "inwardness." It is not solely a disposition of the heart or mind of man. Rather it is a life lived by the grace of God, the Redeemer, in response to and consistent with the conditions and forms of the universe as established by God, the Creator. Consequently, it embraces man as a whole, his physical as well as his spiritual powers, his individual as well as his social relations. From the biblical point of view, the will of God is the supreme command in all spheres of life. No part of life may be regarded as autonomous. Our life and civilization is Christian insofar as we acknowledge God to be the Lord.

This being so, the question presents itself to us, how Christian can our civilization be?

In the history of the church we see mainly three different tendencies at work attempting to answer the problem. The first is the theocratic conception of life. As the etymology of the word indicates, a theocracy is a civilization in which God himself is to be considered the source of

all authority and in which he is supposed to exercise his rule through the church. The chief exponents of this sort of a Christian civilization are the Church of Rome, and Calvinism as once practiced in Geneva, Scotland, and colonial Massachusetts. Notwithstanding the differences between Roman Catholicism and Protestant Calvinism, both are agreed upon a conception of God which makes his majesty the controlling factor of his relation to the world. His commandments are regarded as the law of the nations.<sup>1</sup> In keeping with its religious philosophy, however, Rome, in the realm of natural life, lays emphasis on the will of God as expressed in "natural law," while Calvinism is orientated to the theocratic ideals of the Old Testament. This explains, besides other factors, the different temper of the two civilizations. The one is "inclusive" the other "exclusive," puritanic. Conversely, it makes both groups deal with political and social issues in almost identical manners. The concept of private property is sacred to both. The problem of poverty is approached from the standpoint of Christian charity. Tyrannicide is considered to be a legitimate means for removing a ruler or government which persistently violates the "law of God." Likewise, both groups regard war as a legitimate

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<sup>1</sup> According to a doctrinal statement of the Reformed Presbyterian church, its members "... pray and labor for the peace and welfare of the country, and for its reformation by a constitutional recognition of God as the source of all power, of Jesus Christ as the Ruler of Nations, of the Holy Scriptures as the supreme rule, and of the Christian religion." For this reason "... they refuse to incorporate by any act with the political body until this blessed reformation has been secured," and thus explain their refusal to vote or hold office.

means for settling an international dispute, and both are inclined to instill their warring armies with a crusading spirit. In one word, the Christian civilization of either type bears a conservative, aristocratic stamp because the principles of their systems are basically rooted in belief in God, the Creator. It is the mission of the church, they hold, to guide and direct the affairs of both the individual and of society. Yet the church and the world are to be kept apart. They must not be confused because the consummation of the kingdom will take place not in history but rather beyond history.

The opposite view, that the church should receive its directives from a humanized state, was in modern times forcibly expressed by Richard Rothe<sup>2</sup> in German theology and by Matthew Arnold<sup>3</sup> in British thought. To men of this type the church has only temporary significance because it is merely the means of bringing about a new order in which it will be absorbed by a state established upon the principles of general ethics. Likewise, in the theology of A. T. Coleridge the empirical church is relegated to a department of the state.<sup>4</sup>

In contradistinction to these teachings, Walter Rauschenbusch, the father of the social gospel movement in America, took his stand squarely upon the gospel, as he understood it. "It was the Reign of God on earth for which He (Jesus) consumed His strength, for which He

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<sup>2</sup> See Neve-Heick, *History of Christian Thought*, Vol. II, p. 144.

<sup>3</sup> *Last Essays on Church and State* (1877).

<sup>4</sup> *On the Constitution of Church and State* (1830).

died, and for which He promised to return," Rauschenbusch said.<sup>5</sup> For the sake of Jesus life on earth must be transformed "into the harmony of heaven." The gospel was to Rauschenbusch a revolutionary force in society; consequently, his followers are the "progressives" in both politics and economics.

Though we do not want to belittle the activism which is characteristic of the social gospel, its underlying philosophy is basically unsound both from the standpoint of the gospel as well as in the light of experience. Its first mistake lies in its close affinity with an evolutionistic philosophy of history. It overlooks the demonic in history and forgets the inescapable sinfulness of all historical life. In addition, it interprets the progress made in the rationalization and humanization of life, such as political and economic democracy, as an approximation to the kingdom of God. This means, on the one hand, that the kingdom is secularized and that, on the other, certain historical forms of corporate life are absolutized. According to the Bible, however, men do not "usher in" the kingdom, nor do they ever "build" it. Yet this does not in any way give us the right to forego action. God wants to work not only for us or in us, but also through us. The Christian life is in itself a petition for the coming of the kingdom and a testimony to it. However, our activity for the kingdom is not immediate but mediate.

The same criticism must be applied to the theocratic

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<sup>5</sup> *Christianizing the Social Order* (1922), p. 49.

claims of Rome and Geneva. The church has received no commission from Christ to rule the nations of the earth. The clericalism of Rome is a caricature of the pastoral office as instituted by Christ himself. Like the social gospel, it confuses the "two kingdoms of God"; and just like the former, it leads to a secularization of the church while deifying certain types of social and cultural life. No social form of historical existence can ever be identical with the kingdom.

From what has been said it does not follow that the Christian life can be realized in such a manner that the conflict and struggle will be at end. True, as believers we expect of Christ a full and complete salvation. "If the Son makes you free you are free indeed" (John 8:36), free from sin, death, and devil. Yet we also know that "it has not yet appeared what we shall be" (I John 3:2). But this sober reflection on the Christian life leads neither Paul nor John to moral indifferentism, let alone to defeatism. Both apostles are greatly concerned about the actual holiness of heart and life in all who confess Christ. "To abide in sin," involves, in the eyes of John, a denial of Christ, and "to continue in sin," Paul regards as an absurdity. That which is characteristic of the Christian is that he has "died to sin" (Rom. 6:1 ff).

This goal of the Christian life is not narrowly individualistic. Instead the Christian faith is a social force creating a new relation between the different sexes, social classes, races, and nations. First, it creates a new community, the

church. Secondly, it is like a leaven, leavening a whole civilization.

To be free from sin, however, does not mean, in the eyes of Paul, to be sinless. The difference between these two concepts is fundamental. The idea of sinlessness stems from a moralistic understanding of sin. "It regards sin as a moral misstep which, it thinks, a Christian has been enabled to avoid by his new spiritual state . . . given to him through his conversion." But when Paul speaks about a Christian as being free from sin he has an entirely different thing in mind. To him sin is not primarily a separate moral misstep, but rather a reality under whose power man slaves. "That the Christian is free from sin, means to Paul, that by Christ sin is cast from the throne."<sup>6</sup> In the same way, a Christian society is not an ethically perfect society; rather it is a society in which the Christian gospel is free to exercise its condemning and healing power. The divine purpose of life will not be realized by a progressive amelioration of life, important as this may be from both the viewpoint of faith and society. The "solution" of ethics rather lies beyond the possibilities of this life. Ethics and eschatology belong together. Its problems will not be solved until the Day of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>6</sup> A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, Philadelphia (1949), p. 242.



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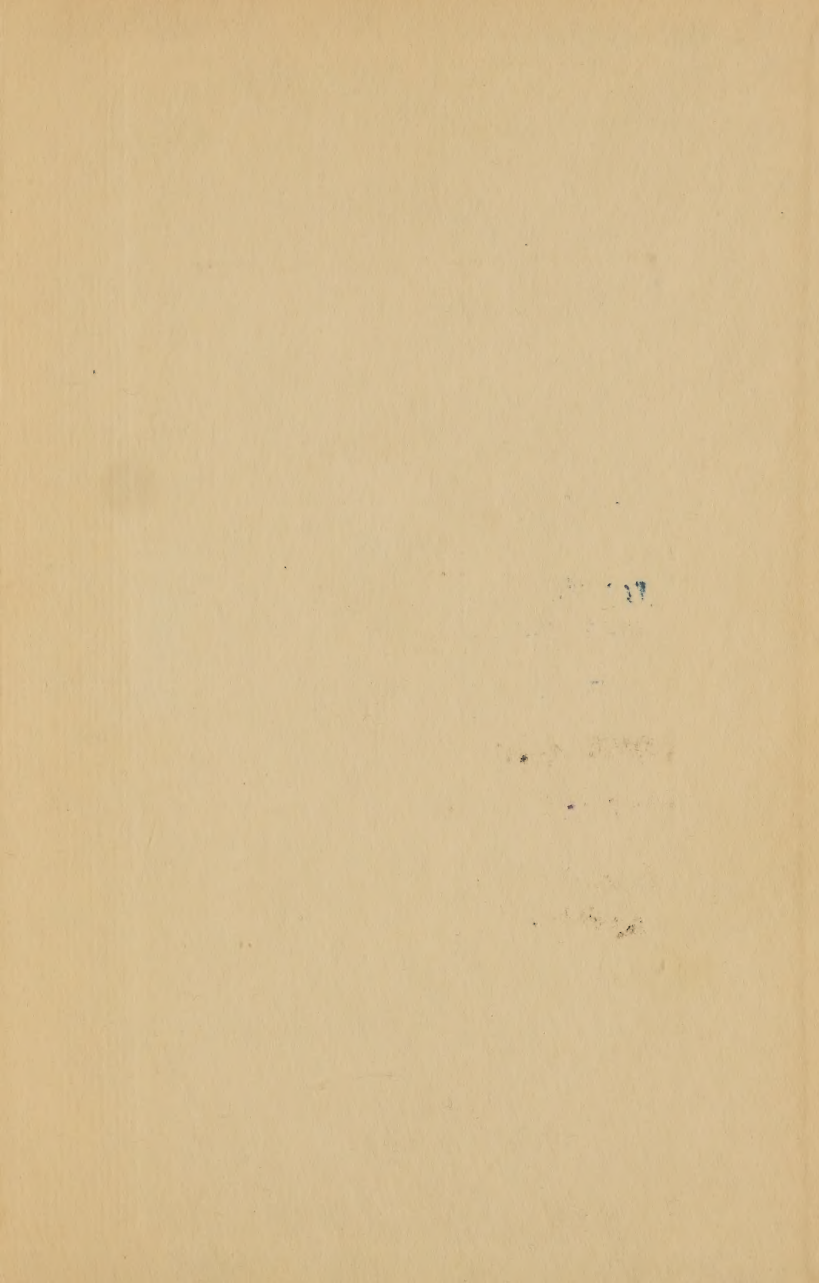




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